



ELLEN PAULERTON

WALLS OF CORN

AND OTHER POEMS

COLLECTED AND PUBLISHED BY

EVA RYAN.



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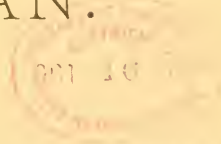
Ellen P. Allerton

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"WALLS OF CORN
AND
OTHER POEMS.

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MEMORIAL SKETCH BY

EVA RYAN.

ILLUSTRATED.



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EVA RYAN.

TO COL. E. A. CALKINS, THE FRIEND AND ADMIRER OF
MRS. ALLERTON AND HER POEMS, WHO HAS SO KINDLY
AIDED BY ADVICE AND SUGGESTIONS IN ITS PREPARATION,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED.

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IN MEMORIAM.

Mrs. Ellen P. Allerton was born in 1835 near Centerville, New York. Being the only girl in the family, and having seven older brothers, she early became the "queen of the household."

When about fifteen years of age she attended school at an academy in Hamilton, New York. At the end of two years she returned to Centerville where she was a successful teacher in the district school. It was about this time she began writing poetry.

In the summer of 1862, while on a visit to Wisconsin, she met A. B. Allerton, and they were married the following fall, and settled on a farm.

The Wisconsin home of Mrs. Allerton was a modern farm cottage near Lake Mills, a village in the central southern portion of the state, away from the railroads and from the noise and bustle of busy life. Some of the earliest settlers had located in the neighborhood. Mr. Allerton's farm was on the west slope of the Rock River valley, with hills rising still farther to the westward. It was historic ground. The marches, retreats, and pursuits of the Black Hawk war had left their lines across the country. A few miles away was Fort Atkinson, now a thriving little railroad town.

Passing the door of the farm house was a broad country road which Mrs. Allerton once described

in its summer aspect as "a ribbon of gray with a border of green." At a short distance the road crossed a clear babbling brook which flowed under a rustic bridge, away through a grove of oaks, down beside the meadows and wheat fields, bisecting other roads toward the Rock River, of which it is a tributary. There was an orchard protected by a belt of willows. Some rods away was a spring, the overflow of which formed a rill leading to the creek. Across the road on the side of the hill to the westward was the abandoned stone quarry described in one of her most charming and characteristic poems.

This delightful home in which Mrs. Allerton led her quiet life for several years, she has described in the following poem:

A nook among the hills, little farm;
Whose fertile acres yield us daily bread;
A homely, low browed dwelling, snug and warm,
With wide blue country skies hung overhead.

No costly splendor here, no gilded glow,
No dear bought pictures hang upon the walls;
But bright and happy faces come and go,
And through the windows God's sweet sunshine falls.

We are not rich in heaps of hoarded gold;
We are not poor, for we can keep at bay
The poor man's haunting spectres, want and cold,
Can keep from owing debts we cannot pay.

We hear the great world surging like a sea,
But the loud roar of winds and waves at war,

Subdued by distance, comes melodiously,
A soft and gentle murmur, faint and far.

We see the small go up, the great come down,
And bless the peaceful safety of our lot,
The broken scepter and the toppling crown,
And crash of falling thrones, these shake us not.

We have some weary toil to struggle through,
Some trials, that we bravely strive to meet;
We have our sorrows, as all mortals do:
We have our joys, too, pure, and calm, and sweet.

Is such a life too even in its flow?
Too silent, calm, too barren of event?
Its very joys to still? I do not know:
I think he conquers all, who wins content.

“The Old Stone Quarry” describes a rude scene in nature, which she adorned with the coloring that only a poet’s fancy can supply. There are but few lessons in poetry and philosophy more instructive or pathetic than that which she drew from the piles of rough rocks, which remained at the place where enterprise and industry had failed to gather a harvest of profit. These lines are beautiful both in rhythm and poetic thought:

“ There are human souls that seem to me
Like this unwrought stone—for all you see—
Is a shapeless quarry of what might be,
Lying idle and overgrown
With tangled weeds, like this beautiful stone—
Possible work left all undone,
Possible victories left unwon.”

Glimpses of description and illusions to her

Wisconsin home life appear constantly in her poems. "The Hickory Tree," the subject of one of her poems, stood in front of the door beside the pathway leading to the gate. It was a monster in height and in the spread of its branches. She portrays it as "tall and royal, and grand to see." It was so indeed. It stood alone, a monarch of its kind. She associated it with her friendships, in these lines:

"And here with friends on summer eves,
We sit in the sunsets mellow glow—
Sit till the night winds toss the leaves.
And the moonbeams sift to the sward below."

The whip-po-wil's music described as floating on the air "when the twilight drops its curtain down" was the identical bird that sang its monotonous notes in an adjacent thicket, as she and her friends sat at her door, or she sat there alone in fellowship with her own romantic fancies.

The description of "The Sleeping Village" relates to Lake Mills, and in perusing its lines one cannot but wonder how she would have described a great city asleep, as in contrast with its noisy daytime.

The "Morning View of Lake Michigan" was written after one of her visits to Milwaukee.

The attentive reader will detect in her other poems hints and remembrances which relate to her old home and its surroundings, and the dear

delights of which she bore in her mind as souvenirs to her grave. The house, the landscape around, the murmuring brook, the clear spring, the winding country road, its "border of green," the hillsides, the fruit-laden trees, the rural path, associated always in her mind with reflections on human life and its vicissitudes, with friends whose communion she had enjoyed in their midst, and with which their images were inseparably blended,

"Beautiful Things" has especially received recognition throughout the United States, and is unsurpassed by any American author. It had been reprinted in all the principal newspapers before she left Wisconsin, and its classical beauty recognized by its insertion in an American Anthology.

Admirable, suggestive, full of native philosophy, inspired by genius as these poems are, they are surpassed in vigor, in wealth of imagery and ripened thought by her Kansas poems. She had passed middle life when she came to Kansas. But her poetic mind was late in bearing its best fruits. She advanced in poetic growth as she advanced in years. The poems written under the new skies of the farther west, under new influences, with the inspiration of new phases which nature presented, studying a different line of tradition, with, perhaps, a more extended circle of admiring

and appreciative friends, are her best titles to fame. "Walls of Corn" and "The Trail of Forty-Nine" are the finest productions of her genius.

"Walls of Corn" was written in 1884. A short distance from her home was a belt of timber which was her favorite resort, more, probably, because it reminded her of Wisconsin surroundings. In the spring the field across the road was planted in corn. Often in the evening she watched this field of corn from the door, and heard the broad blades as they rustled and clashed like soldiers' weapons when in close conflict, and admired it all. Little did she think this field of corn would hide her from that dearer spot, that "wooded dell" that lay at the foot of the "billowy swell" and that

" All the world would be narrowed down
To walls of corn, when sear and brown."

But thus it came to pass, and as the cornfield obstructed her vision, that beautiful poem, which gave her more fame than any other, was written.

Mrs. Allerton was loved and appreciated not alone for the productions of her pen, but for her social qualities, and for the active and ready interest taken in benevolent and charitable enterprises. Indeed charity was her crowning virtue. Not the charity that makes "swift feet" to relieve material want, but that broader charity that

hides defects and covers imperfections. This trait was shown conspicuously in her generous treatment of the literary efforts of those who *might* be called her rivals. She saw and freely acknowledged their merit, pointing out their beauties, and ignoring or touching lightly their blemishes. The lowest was not beneath her kindly notice, and the highest did not awe her soul into blind worship.

Her modest, unobtrusive nature, and acute sensitiveness would always have kept her in the background but for her large heart, her broad sympathies, and her fertile intellect. Her poems were but the reflex of herself. Their purity of thought and diction was but the outflow of such a heart. Her enthusiastic defense of right was but the harmony of her soul, and her castigation of wrong, the protestation of her nature. There is, perhaps, not so much variety of style in her writings as in those who write only by virtue of intellectual force—by brain power—as Byron wrote,

She seldom indulged in sarcasm. It was only when the wrong could not be reached by argument, when reason thrown against it fell flat like a bullet from "A Man-of-War," and dynamite only was available, then her projectiles of sarcasm struck home. The bitter irony and sarcasm in the little poem "Tar and Feather Reform,"

showed her indignation at the wrongs perpetrated under the hypocritical pretense of outraged virtue (a crime infinitely greater than the sin it sought to punish,) how in her heart she detested "cant hypocrisy," and the clamorous throngs that cry "Stone her! Stone her!" and then cower and shrink away when the search light is thrown upon them. Uncharitable vengeance, and unchristian revenge, were not in her creed.

She had no children of her own, but her mother heart won the love of those placed under her care. No one could be in her home long without discovering the marked respect and loving regard they had for her. She was wisely, womanly and motherly, what more need be said?

She has laid aside the work of wife, friend and writer, leaving us the serene satisfaction that it was well and conscientiously done. Such a woman and her life is a cheering stimulus to all fellow life. Her memory will ever remain a warm and radiant token to those who knew her best.

Mrs. Hattie Peeler pays a beautiful tribute to her memory in the following lines:

"September reigns o'er hills and plains
A radiant smiling queen,
With beauteous face and regal grace,
And robe of gold and green;
The sunflowers gay bedeck her way,
And in the breezes nod,
Like plumed knights with tassels bright,
The yellow golden rod.

The wild bird's song is blythe and long
As here and there they roam.
Gay butterfly sails idly by
Nor reck's of storms to come.
The fruit trees hold a wealth of gold,
Plum, apple, peach and pear:
A mellow haze fills all the days,
A calm and tranquil air.

On fertile plain, where sun and rain
Their equal parts have borne,
Stand side by side, in stately pride,
Tall ranks of ripening corn.
Golden and green, the colors are seen,
Shading downward to amber pale,
As the "Walls of Corn" in the sun of morn
Fling their banners green.

There is a voice at morn from "Walls of Corn,"
Telling of comfort, of plenty, of cheer,
Of toil never spurned, of wealth fairly earned,
In the harvest which draweth so near:
And again soft and low, comes a sound sad and slow
Like a sob to mine ears is borne,
Or the breath of a sigh as the wind passes by
O'er the tall golden ranks of the corn.

It tells of a lute that is silent, or mute,
Of a singer whose earth songs are o'er;
Of a sweet kindly life, free from envy or strife,
Of a parting to meet here no more:
Of hearts sad and lone since the loved one has gone,
Of a grave where they linger to mourn.
Of a life work complete, of a rest calm and sweet
For the singer who sang of the corn.

The bright sunlight falls on stately green walls
And they change into amber and gold,
But the song, it is done, the singer is gone,
And her story on earth has been told.
Beyond the borders of time, in that beautiful clime
Where none sicken, or sorrow, or mourn,
'Mid a glorified band in that bright summer land
Dwells the singer that sang of the corn."

Ellen Palmer Allerton.

Died August 31, 1893.

There's the sound of a sob in the "Walls of Corn,
Whose banners toss on the breeze of morn,"

And a threnoby throbs through the fields to-day,
For the voice of their singer has passed away.

Yet fields are fair though hearts are bare,
And death has gathered a harvest there.

* * * * *

She toiled and sang—and "heaven's dome
Smiled softly over her prairie home."

While the "Walls of Corn" through the summer days
Shut out the world from her wistful gaze.

And she sang of those walls that hid from view
The dearest spot that her vision knew,

And, later, of walls that shut away
Her dimming eyes from the light of day—

And then, in the dark, sang on and on
Of hope, and rest, and the coming dawn.

* * * * *

Crisping and ripening stands the corn
"With banners flung to the breeze of morn,"

While the sunflowers nod—and the golden rod—
Over a home of Kansas sod.

—ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE.

A Tribute to Mrs. Ellen P. Allerton.

O! sweet are the songs of the muses,
Like breath from the roses in June,
To the soul that aspires and uses
With a heart that's awake and in tune.
For the beauty of earth has no sweetness
The soul may not gather and own;
And the worth of true hearts have more greatness
Than power encircling a throne.

Thy life was fair truth's best adorning,
Thy smile like the roses in June
Gathering sweetness and joy with the morning
And spreading them far with the noon.
Thy heart was a blossom of sunlight
With the spirit to conquer and rise
And brighten the azure of midnight
With stars that are noblest and wise.

Thy poems are sweet and enchanting
As music that floats o'er the sea
From isles where bright sunbeams are slanting
Their gold over hill top and tree.
Their worth to true womanhood bringing
A wreath from the garlands of time
Where Fame thy sweet praises are singing
In anthems of beauty sublime.

For all life is a poem of glory
Neither reason or senses can grasp
Till we read every verse in the story
And the hand of the author we clasp.
And thy songs were like Sappho's of olden,
With visions of soul-land that shine
Till the harp of the earthly was golden
From the hand of the Author Divine.

—GEORGE W. WARDER.

To the Memory of Ellen P. Allerton.

Before the gates of morning
A singer, sweet and strong,
Poured out in measured cadence
A tender, soulful song—
And many weary toilers
'Mid labor's clash and clang,
Took heart, and hope, and courage;
From th' message which sang;

A message full of promise
Of better things to come,
The promise of a morning
Where hate, and greed, and rum,
Shall have no place or standing,
Shall have no right to be
Betwixt the gates of morning
On the purple sundown sea.

Not they alone who labor
In the sunny fields or mart,
But they whose brains are wedded
To busy hand and heart,
Have heard the singer's message,
Have heard her songs divine,
Have felt her inspiration,
And bow them at her shrine.

—H. W. ROBY.

MY AMBITION.

I HAVE my own ambition — it is not
To mount on eagle wings and soar away
Beyond the palings of the common lot,
Scorning the griefs and joys of every day;
I would be human — toiling, like the rest
With tender human heart-beats in my breast.

Not on cold, lonely heights, above the ken
Of common mortals would I build my fame,
But in the kindly hearts of living men,
There, if permitted, would I write my name;
Who builds above the clouds must dwell alone:
I count good fellowship above a throne.

And so, beside my door I sit and sing
My simple strains — now sad, now light and gay.
Happy, if this or that but wake one string,
Whose low, sweet echoes give me back the lay —
And happier still, if girded by my song,
Some strained and tempted soul stands firm and strong.

Humanity is much the same; if I
Can give my neighbors' pent-up thought a tongue,
And can give voice to his unspoken cry
Of bitter pain, when my own heart is wrung,
Then we two meet upon a common land,
And henceforth stand together, hand in hand.

I send my thought its kindred thought to greet,
Out to the far frontier, through crowded town.
Friendship is precious, sympathy is sweet:
So these be mine, I ask no laurel-crown.
Such my ambition, which I here unfold,
So it be granted — mine is wealth untold.

Walls of Corn.

SMILING and beautiful, heaven's dome,
Bends softly over our prairie home,

But the wide, wide lands that stretched away,
Before my eyes in the days of May,

The rolling prairies billowy swell,
Breezes uplands and the timbered dell,

Stately mansion and hut forlorn,
All are hidden by walls of corn.

All wide the world is narrowed down,
To walls of corn, now sear and brown.

What do they hold—these walls of corn,
Whose banners toss on the breeze of morn?

He who questions may soon be told,
A great state's wealth these walls enfold.

No sentinels guard these walls of corn,
Never a sound the of warder's horn.

Yet the pillars are hung with gleaming gold,
Left all unbarred, though thieves are bold,

Clothes and food for the toiling poor,
Wealth to heap at the rich man's door;

Meat for the healthy, and balm for him
Who moans and tosses in chamber dim;

Shoes for the barefooted, pearls to twine,
In the scented tresses of ladies fine;

Things of use for the lowly cot,
Where (bless the corn) want cometh not;



No sentinels guard these walls of corn,
Never is sounded the warder's horn.

Luxuries rare for the mansion grand,
Gifts of a rich and fertile land;

All these things, and so many more,
It would fill a book to name them o'er.

Are hid and held in these walls of corn,
Whose banners toss on the breeze of morn.

Where do they stand, these walls of corn,
Whose banners toss on the breeze of morn?

Open the ⁺alas, conned by rule,
In the olden days of the district school.

Point to the rich and bounteous land,
That yields such fruits to the toiler's hand.

"Treeless desert " they called it then,
Haunted by beasts and forsook by men.

Little they knew what wealth untold,
Lay hid where the desolate prairies rolled.

Who would have dared, with brush or pen
As this land is now, to paint it then?

And how would the wise ones have laughed in scorn,
Had prophets foretold these walls of corn,
Whose banners toss on the breeze of morn?

ANNABELLE.

A Poem of the Heart.

Look there, my friend, through yonder clump of trees.
You see yon lofty, weather-beaten wall?
You hear the hum of wheels, the broken fall
Of pent-up waters borne along the breeze?
That is the old brown mill. Its walls have stood
While children's children have grown old and gray,
While ruthless axes have hewn down the wood,
And yonder town has grown, rood after rood,
The mill has stood there as it stands today.

You wonder why I point it out to you?
Well, listen. You shall hear a simple tale—
Simple in homely truth—which cannot fail
To wake your tender pity: which must sue
Sue your—you have a heart?—to charity.
Only a story of a child's mistake;
Of blindness lifted when too late to see;
Of woman's waking when too late to wake;
Of man's strong passion hardly kept in check,
And the strange ending—if things end at all—
I sometimes fancy they do not, but break and break
In ceaseless ripples, such as crimp the lake
When in its depths one lets a pebble fall.

Come up the stream a little way, and look
Behind those drooping elms. You see
A low, white cottage by the roaring brook,
With tangled garden, to its weeds forsook,
And broken panes, where rains beat dismally.
Almost within the shadow of the mill,
O'erhung and sheltered by yon craggy hill,

The cottage stands. And here, at eventide,
After a glorious, golden day of June,
Just as the sunset paled and rose the moon,
John Dent, the miller, brought his girlish bride.

Across the valley had a marriage bell
Pealed joyfully at morn. A child had stood
(She was but little more)—young Annabelle—
And uttered vows which only womanhood,
Full-grown and earnest, knowing well itself,
Should dare to utter. It was not for pelf—
No scheming child of sordid need was she.
Her fresh young heart all meanness was above;
And when young John had wooed her tenderly
And gently as the south wind woos the sea,
She gave him what, in truth, she thought was love.

Had she but lived and died and never known,
As many women do: had she not learned
What else she had to give—what slow fires burned,
Smouldered and hid, fed by themselves alone:
Had no hand stirred them to a quenchless blaze.
All had gone well—no, loveless is not well—
But had not gone so ill. Sad, sad to tell
How woke into a wail the silent tone:
How evil stole into her quiet days;
How throbbed her heart strings like a tolling bell.

For years her life was calm. Sweetly she went
Calm household ways, and kept the hearthstone bright.
Light was her heart at noon, serene at night,
In simple kindness was well content.
Yet oft she wondered why the tenderness
That closely clasped her in its folding arm,
Could wake no passion-throb of happiness.
Why loving words, so earnest and so warm,
Should have so little potency to charm.
Chided herself, and blamed her girlish heart

Because it gave so little—so much less
Than what was given her—so kept apart,
And would not leap and thrill at love's caress.

And when her first-born laughed upon her knee,
And looked up with its father's eyes
Into her own, with innocent surprise,
She wondered why a baby's careless glee,
Its clasping fingers and its aimless kiss,
Should wake within her heart such throbbing bliss,
Where all before had been so calm and still.
Yet more she blamed herself—resolved to be
A loving wife henceforth—but then, ah me!
She had to learn that love comes not at will,
But grows—if grown at all—spontaneously;
Its clasping tendrills oft refuse to twine,
Nor unto careful pressure flows its wine.

Thus ran the days: at morn her household toil.
Then needlework or books, both new and old;
And whatsoever poets sang or told,
Found in her hungry heart a fertile soil:
The mighty master's strains were household words,
So often had she conned them o'er and o'er
And humbler poets' songs and lays of birds,
Blended their music round her cottage door.
She trained her flowers, sang her cradle song,
And taught her babe to lisp its father's name
First of all words: and softly went and came,
And neither talked nor thought of "woman's wrongs."

In afternoons of sunny summer days,
Along the path that runs beside the hill—
Now overgrown with weeds—to yonder mill
She turned her feet: and where the sunlight plays
There in the doorway through those giant trees,
The child beside her, and the toying breeze
Lifting the ringlets of her dusky hair,

She sat, the while her husband plied his toil,
Oft noting, as he passed, the picture fair
Of child and mother—often pausing there
To touch her brow, or lift a ringlet's coil.

So passed the days. The brook went down the glen
After its labor, singing on its way,
Like task-bound school-boy just let out to play:
The great trees rustled—there were many then—
As summer winds, flapping their lazy wings,
Came down among them from the breezy hill:
The vale was fresh and green with growing things,
And peace, such peace as only duty brings,
Sat there within the doorway of the mill.

Meanwhile the child-wife grew to womanhood,
Unfolding with her life but half complete,
Although she knew it not—her willing feet,
And hands as willing, doing naught but good.
And was she beautiful? 'Tis woman-like
To ask the question. Yes; yet none could tell
Wherein her beauty lay. I could not strike
Her picture, had I all the thousand dyes
That paint the air. Black were her eyes—
This I remember—with softly gleaming lights
Trembling within their depths, as in a well
You catch the gleam of stars on summer nights.

You grow impatient, and you wonder why
I do not tell my story, and have done.
I pray your patience—'tis so sad a one,
I linger at its borders tremblingly.
But here it is: On one ill-fated morn,
A senseless form was laid beneath her roof,
Bleeding and bruised, with garments smeared and torn,
And clotted hair, all red with ghastly gore.

"Here, Annabelle," said John, and said no more:
He knew her tender heart—it was enough.

Asking no questions, with her gentle hands
She washed the blood from the pale, swollen face,
And from the matted hair, and sought apace
To win him back to life. The loosened bands
Tightened at last: the silent, pulseless wheel
Of life turned slowly round; he opened his eyes—
Blue eyes they were—and looked with blank surprise
On the kind faces bent beside the bed;
Asked where he was, and how he came to feel
So bruised and battered—and what ailed his head?

"We picked you up," said John, "by yonder cliff—
A broken limb, bruised head—if that is all.
I saw your horse take fright, and shy and fall,
Wrenching a sapling from its rocky bed.
She fell beneath you—so did save your life,
We hope and trust—the noble beast is dead."

"Poor Nan!" the stranger sighed, "I loved her well;
The graceful creature was my truest friend;
And I could weep that thus should be her end.
What frightened her I'm sure I cannot tell;
She never once her foothold lost before,
And we have traversed half a continent.
I do remember that she shied—no more.
Poor Nan! Ah well! I ought to be content,
And bless the fates that brought me to your door."

The surgeon came and set the broken limb,
And Annabelle looked on with pitying eye
The while her tender tears fell silently;
And thought him brave—admired the courage grim
That bore the wrench and strain unflinchingly.
He never winced; the weakness of a groan
Parted not once the pallor of his lips.

So still he lay, but for clenched finger-tips,
You might have thought him senseless as a stone.

A woman's pity is a dangerous thing—
Most when its softness is all mixed and blent
With woman's admiration. Such content
It bath of passion and of tenderness,
Which from its tearful dew luxuriant spring,
That she who feels needs double guardedness
O'er her heart's citadel; and none the less
When in that heart lie mines of untold wealth
Unwrought by human hand. Its great largess
Unlocked, unguarded, yields to subtle stealth.

For weeks the stranger lay, fevered and ill,
Tossing at times in wild delirium,
At others, lying faint, and pale, and dumb,
In limp exhaustion, without speech or will.
Oft in his fevered ravings he would talk
Of distant scenes—a spry-washed seaside home;
Of his young sisters—then he seemed to walk
By forest streams, or mountain passes clomb;
He raved of the Sierras; tossed a rock
Over the crags toward the Western Sea,
Marked its reboundings with a ghastly glee,
And laughed at each reverberating shock.

At last the fires burned out. Life seemed to stand
Poised on a balance. Breathless days he lay,
With his pale brow by chill, damp breezes fanned
From off another shore. Within the shadows dim
That fringe the skirts of that uncertain land
From whence no traveler o'er the misty rim
Comes with returning feet, day after day
He lingered at the borders, as if Death,
Putting his hot sword back into its sheath—
Having won fairly—scorned to take his prey.

Meanwhile young Annabelle, watching his lightest sigh,
With sleepless eyes above his pillow hung;
And when the folded portals backward swung,
And the ebb'd tides came faintly flowing in,
She bowed her stately head, and silently—
So glad was she that Life at last should win—
Wept tears of joy—such tears are soonest dry!

Then came the days, so slow and yet so swift,
Of convalescence—days when vanquished pain
Flees back among the shadows—when again
The prostrate forces slowly, feebly lift,
Like the bowed spears of tempest-beaten grain.
When Robert Lorne, with puzzled, pleased surprise,
Did first discover what a lovely nurse
He had, marked—what I've told you in my verse—
Her dusky ringlets and her starry eyes;
And then he wondered, thought, and wondered still,
What freak of fortune, what mistake of fate,
Had planted such a regal flower as that
Within the shadow of a dusty mill.

Such thoughts were dangerous—like her pity. Time
Wore on, and as he chafed and restless grew,
Impatient of his weakness—'tis his due
To say he had been patient in his pain—
She brought her books, and tried to soothe the chime
Of flowing measures and of tender rhyme;
And read to him, in cadence clear and sweet,
That seemed to him, in its low rhythmic beat,
Like the soft footfalls of the summer rain.

They talked together, and he wondered more,
How had she gathered in that quiet vale,
Where pompous Learning had ne'er swept its trail,
Of wit and wisdom such a wondrous store?
He drew her on, and sounded hidden wells,
That into sparkling streamlets bubbled o'er,

As pure, sweet springs that never flowed before
Start at a touch along the basky dells.
Her inner life—its strange, sweet mysteries—
Lay all unrolled before his eager eyes;
So frankly talked she—to her own surprise—
And oft her laugh rang out like tinkling bells.

Swift were those days, without a thought of wrong—
Days that on swift and gilded pinions sped—
Ere Conscience had tolled out her stern alarm,
And pointed to the rocks that loomed ahead.
Would that no others came into my song!
You see what baleful shadow, dire and dim,
Hovered about the sick-room; stole apace
Into the unbarred door, and held the place?
It came to this—he loved her, she loved him.

There came an hour when but a little thing—
A thoughtless act, and innocent, because
It held no guilty thought of broken laws—
Revealed it to them both. He was asleep—
At least, she thought he was—the fanning wing
Of a stray breeze tossing the chestnut hair
That lay about his brow; and Annabelle
Rising to leave the room, just stooped her there,
Softly put back the clusters, and then—well,
She laid her cheek upon it. Then the bell
Of warning sounded—but it rang too late.
She felt a thrill that never once before
Had stirred her heart—that never, nevermore
Must stir it thus again. Alas, the fate
That had withheld such sweetness till too late!

Then knew he that she loved him—raised his arms,
And would have clasped her, but she turned,
While all her face with painful blushes burned,
And left him—with a thousand vague alarms

Tossing the heart, which, at that mute caress
Had, for one moment, leaped with happiness.

Thenceforth her manner changed. She silent grew,
And often met with an averted eye
His questioning look; and well and faithfully
Strove with her foe, determined to subdue.
Meanwhile the man grew strong. His hurts were well.
And the soft tints of health began to come
Across the sunken pallor of his cheek.
He took slow walks—still further cure to seek—
Adown the brook, and through the grassy dell,
And soon began to talk of going home.

"'Tis a long journey," said the miller, "wait
Awhile; be not in haste to go, I pray.
You had best tarry and submit to fate."
Laughed he, "till you have strength to shut the gate—
(He just had left it wide) you've not to-day."
Poor man! he little knew what meaning fell
From out his careless banter, on the ears
Of guest and wife. No truant, tell-tale tears
Sprang to her eyes; she kept her bosom's strife
On its own battle-field, and marshalled well
Her gathered forces, even while a knell,
Struck on her heartstrings, sent its hollow toll
In sobbing shudders through her inmost soul.
There lay her dead—a scathed and blighted life.

"If go you must," said honest John, "Good bye.
The mill awaits me with its silent wheels;
The summer morn with quiet footstep steals
Quickly away, and so, perforce, must I."
"Farewell," said Robert Lorne, "My thanks accept
For all your kindness. I shall hold it well,
With grateful care, among my treasures kept."
"Small thanks to me," said John, "the praise is due

To yonder tireless nurse who tended you:
With her I leave you—talk to Annabelle."

So briskly toward the mill he walked away,
Humming a tune in careless, happy tone,
Leaving the two, and so they stood alone.
What could they do? and what could either say?
Only good bye? Had they but said no more,
Love might have died a silent, smothered death.
Like smouldering embers where there stirs no breath.
But words are flame; once given vent and space,
The fiery tide fast overleaps its shore,
And seldom ebbs again into its place.

One silent moment—save the throbbing beat
With which two hearts kept time—and then he came
And stood beside her, trembling. "I can tame,"
Said he, "the wild mustang, though strong and fleet,
But cannot tame my heart. Turn not away,
That sad, pale face. Hear me this once, I pray,
For I must speak or die, though years too late.
John Dent spoke truly, though he little knew
How what he said was doubly, direly true:
I have not strength enough to shut the gate."

I know you love me—nay, hide not your face.
Drop not your eye—'tis veiled e'en now with tears.
Let me look deep into its starry glow
Once more—it is the last, last time you know!
I knew you loved me, when, with tender grace,
You stooped and touched me with your cheek. The years,
Many or few, that slowly come and go,
One thing they cannot take with them. I shall keep,
Hidden with my lone heart's deepest deep,
The memory of one moment's happiness,
When thrilled my whole soul to that soft caress."

"You should not say such things to me!" she said.
Entreaty and reproach were in her look;

Her face was deadly pale, her whole frame shook.
"You see my weakness, which I seek to tread
With all my gathered strength beneath my feet;
The task is hard enough—why will you add
Strength to my enemy, and steal my own?
Leave me, I pray, and let me fight alone
The weary battle—I am sick and sad."

"Poor little one!" he said. "I pity you
From my heart's core—but do myself as well.
How it shall fare with me I cannot tell;
But you will be to every duty true,
And go your daily ways like some sweet saint;
With feet that never falter, though you faint.
You, but a weak woman, will a foe subdue
That conquers me—I cannot be like you."

"'Tis only to endure," she said. "The pain
Will soon be over. We must take
The sequence of our folly. Those that make,
As we have made, shipwreck of happiness,
Must fare without it. Life is not so long—
What signifies a heartache more or less?
A few wild throbs that wrench the breast and brain,
Then—if we conquer—cometh the calm of peace,
Next, that of death, and then—all struggles cease."

"'Tis a sad end that only comes with death!
I think the saddest thing that mortals know
Is such a love, that only endeth so.
O Annabelle! down to my latest breath
Must I endure this wrong—the perfect mate
After long years of waiting found too late?
Matches, they say, are made in Heaven above,
Where hearts are wed. If marriage is but love,
All other marriage, then, must spurious be,
And you, before high Heaven, belong to me!"

"Forbear!" the woman cried, "'Twas hard before;
'Tis cruel that you add such agony,
Heaping it high upon my misery.
O cease, and leave me—I can bear no more!"
"I go, but once, *just once* your heart shall throb,
Where it should always throb, close up to mine."
He clasped her close, and while sob after sob
Shook her from head to foot, on brow and neck,
On tear-wet cheek, and pale and quivering lip,
Pressed passionate kisses. Little did he reck
In that mad moment of the bitter drip
So sure to follow that one drop of wine!

You blame such madness? so do I, but then
Poor human nature, wrenched and passion-tossed,
At best intent too often goes astray.
We little know how much own, so crossed,
Could bear—whether the strength, which in our day
Of sunny peace seems so secure, could stand
Amid the sweeping storm, and hold at bay
The rush of whirlwinds, tempest-driven rain,
And the forked lightning, with its fiery hand.
We know not, until tried, I say again,
What we can bear—we all have need to pray.

At last he whispered hoarsely, "Fare thee well.
Earth holds no parting half so sad as this.
Would it had been but death! no tolling bell
Did ever utter forth such wretchedness!
You will find peace—such peace as waits to bless
Enduring patience; but, oh Annabelle!
Sometimes when, in your saintly purity,
At the still evening hour you kneel to pray,
Remember and ask pity, too, for me."
He loosed his arms, then turned and rushed away.
She stood and watched him from the open door—
Once stretched her hands ('twas well he did not see)

As if to call him back—cried, “Woe is me!
 I never, never shall behold him more!”
 Then she caught up her boy, and held him pressed,
 While she wept wildly, to her aching breast.

* * * * *

A year had flown on slow and quiet wing
 Above the vine-wreathed cottage by the mill;
 Again the wild rose all along the hill
 Hung out its lavish blossoms. All the ground
 Was spread with summer's richness; on the wing
 The wild bird sang—and still the wheels went round.
 It was a fragrant morning; every breath of air
 Was laden with the breezy scents of pine.
 From out the open casement a low tune
 Came softly floating, like a tender prayer—
 The wife was singing at her daily care.
 Just shadowed was her brow with pensive thought,
 Yet was it calm and smooth and purely fair—
 'Twas plain had come to her the peace she sought.

But how fared Robert Dorne? Not quite so well.
 With restless foot that never ceased to roam,
 He wandered widely, and no chosen home
 Found anywhere. The ocean's heaving swell
 Best suited him; and mountain heights
 Swept by wild tempests: stormy nights,
 When shook and jarred the everlasting hills
 Beneath the tread of thunders, when the glare
 Of the red lightnings lit the midnight air,
 And sweeping torrents tore the mountain side—
 These chimed with his dark mood. But peaceful vales,
 And silent rivers with their gentle glide,
 And sleeping lakes, flecked with snowy sails
 Of floating ships: the calm of eventide—
 All scenes of quiet—in his feverish soul
 But stirred the demon of unrest. The bowl
 Of fierce excitement, with a restless thirst,

Deeply he quaffed, yet still, as at the first,
He thirsted. At last, heart sick and sore,
When utter weariness had done its worst,
He turned his face toward his native shore.

"Once more," he thought, "to look upon her face
Unseen by her. I will not break the calm
Which she, mayhap, hath found. Her tender palm
She need not lift to warn me from the place,
But once to watch her in her gentle grace,
Twining, perchance, the roses at her door.
It shall be only once—I'll dare no more."

And so it chanced, that breezy morn of June,
Crouching within the copse that crowned the hill,
He listened to the low and pensive tune
That floated through the casement. Waiting still,
He saw not, though he heard her. Finally
She came within the doorway—raised her hand
To shade her eyes, and, with a startled look,
Gazed down the beaten pathway by the brook.
He wondered at her air. What did she see?
Following her eye with his, he saw a man
With wild, excited mien, and hurried tread,
Approach to where she stood—heard what he said:
"Your husband, madam! quickly as you can
Come to the mill. He's hurt, and well nigh dead."

Swiftly she flew, as if her feet had wings,
To where he lay. He saw, looked up, and smiled;
Whispered "God keep my wife and child!"
Then closed his eyes upon all earthly things.
Then swept across her soul a grief so wild
That reason nearly reeled. Regret, remorse,
Uttered accusing voices. Had she been
Within her secret heart a loyal wife,
She had not felt the pain, so swift and keen,
That cut her conscience like a two-edged knife.

The sight, the sound, were pitiful! a low moan
 Came from the set, white lips; no tears she shed,
 But gazed with stony look upon the dead.
 At last a voice, in low and husky tone:
 "Take her away. Do you not see," it said,
 That this is killing her?" She raised her eyes
 with one quick glance of sudden, shocked surprise:
 Saw it was *he*, and fainted on the corse.

He came not near her in her grief, but when
 The day of burial came, he watched afar,
 With strange emotions in his heart at war.
 He saw her, sable-clad and drooping, stand
 Beside the open grave, clasping the head
 Of her half-orphaned boy, and pitied her—
 So sad, so drooping, did she seem—but then
 There crossed his pity a wild wave of joy,
 (Albeit remorse came in with its alloy),
 That howsoever stricken, she was *free*.
 "Sure none may claim her now," he thought, "but me!"
 A month went by, and then a letter came,
 Telling her that when the year was done,
 Its last day faded, its last setting sun
 Gone out of sight with its last hues of flame,
 She might expect him at her cottage door.
 "Fail not," it said, "to look for me at even:

If living, you will see me—not before.
 I well can wait a year without complaint.
 With hope to lighten with its joyous leaven—
 I who did think to wait forever more!
 Though love is haste, it still hath self-restraint;
 And not a slander, not a breath of taint,
 Must soil the plumage of my bird of heaven!"

* * * * *

The year at last had fled. The scents of June
 Once more went floating softly down the dell;

Once more the tall grass rocked beneath the swell
Of summer winds; in noisy babbling tune,
The brook came singing from the creaking mill;
And once again, along the beetling hill,
The wild rose hung its pennons. Evening fell:
The sunset faded, and the summer moon
Rose calmly, and hung out her silver shield
Athwart the dusky bosom of the night.
One star, and then another, in the field
Of heaven came out and blossomed into light.
Silence unbroken hung about the door
Of the lone cottage, only and o'er and o'er
From out the lone shadows one sad whippowil
Sang his night-song, so plaintive, yet so shrill;
And the brook babbled to its sedgy shore.

Within sits Annabelle, and counts the ticks
That measure of the travel, step by step,
Of the slow laggard, Time. In rosy sleep
Her play-tired darling lies. A silence deep
The silence of hushed waiting wraps her round.
She listens for a footstep, for a sound beside;
Both come at last. The low gate clicks:

Upon the gravelled walk a manly tread,
Firm, eager, then a quick rap at the door:
Then, "Robert!" "Annabelle!"—and then no more
In those first moments is by either said.
What need of words? Her head is on his breast,
His arms about her, and both hearts at rest.
What need, when each knew all that each could say!
Thus, deep emotion with its fetters flung
About the speech, hath oft "tied fast the tongue."
Love, like a brook, starts singing on its way,
Ripples and murmurs in its shallow play:
Like a deep river when it meets the sea,
It rolls into its ocean silently.

* * * * *

Again the wedding bells, above the town
And through the valley, where a year ago
Sobbed forth a funeral knell so sad and slow.
Pealed out in throbs of joy. Love wore its crown
In solemn awe: for well did those two know
How in its hunger it had wronged the dead.
Yet both had sought to quench it: both had tried
To kill a deathless thing which had not died.
Their joy was born of sorrow. Solemnly
They hold in close embrace their child of tears.
The bride is pale though lovely. Shadows lie
Within her glorious eyes, she trembles, fears,
Amid her joy half shivers as with dread;
And yet the words she utters now are true.
It is her heart that speaks—this time she knew
The full, sweet meaning of the words she said.

They went away: and now in foreign lands,
Through storied scenes they wander at their will.
They hear no more the clatter of the mill,
Although it still grinds on. The cottage stands
Lonely and desolate, and no one heeds
The smothered flowers that choke amid the weeds.
Will they come back again? I cannot say.
I fancy that they dread, not love, the spot.
My story ends—a strange one, is it not?

The twilight falls. The moon hangs o'er the hill:
The brook goes darkly down its winding way;
Ceased for the day is the clatter of the mill:
Along the valley stretch the shadows gray:
And you, I see, are weeping. Come away.

The Mortgage — A Christmas Tale.

A Christmas eve. The white stars glow
Afar in the deep, dark sky;
The moonbeams sparkle on the frozen snow,
And the merry bells go by.

Love scatters gifts, and voices gay
Ring out in laughter sweet,
Amid the scamper of children's play,
And the tread of dancing feet.

While happy childhood hugs its toy,
And the windows blaze with light,
And the little town goes wild with joy—
Is any one sad to-night?

* * * * *

A farm house, where the village street
Turns to a country road,
Where sleighs go skimming, smooth and fleet,
Each with its merry load.

Within, no sound of festal mirth—
No lights flash out on the snow,
Two old folks cower above the hearth—
Their two gray heads bowed low.

Why sit they so, beside the fire,
Speaking but words of grief?
Trouble is on them, dark and dire—
A mortgage—and grace is brief.

And that not all, that not the worst.
"O, John! our John!" cries she.
"Had we but the boy I bore and nursed,
We never should homeless be.
Dead in the mountains, bleak and cold—
Unburied for aught we know—

Alas, and alas for the quest of gold.
And the cruel cold and snow!"

* * * * *

Up in a town a moneyed man,
In his mansion tall and grand,
Knits his brow as he stoops to scan
A paper in his hand.

"I'll do it, I'll do it," he softly said.
"Their grief shall be touched with joy.
"Twill pluck one thorn from my dying bed—
And Winnie—she loved the boy."

He knew the sorrow she did not tell;
He knew, and it grieved him sore.
(The old man loved his ducats well.
But he loved his daughter more.)

"Winnie, Winnie!" he called, "come here."
The daughter came slowly in,
Pale as a lily on the mere,
Her wan cheeks hollow and thin.

"Your Christmas gift, my little maid;
See—do you understand?
"Tis all your own," he said, and laid
The paper in her hand.

A glance, a flush of grand surprise,
A word of thanks—but one.
The tears were streaming from her eyes.
Her arms about him thrown.

"Go, love," he said, "the streets are light,"
And led her to the door.

"You know whose hearts are sad to-night—
I need not tell you more."

* * * * *

Still sat, before the dull red flame,
Those two, so bowed and gray:

- And ere they heard or saw who came,
At their feet a paper lay.
- "Dear friends, I bring my Christmas gift—
The mortgage—there it lies."
She seized it—"See the mortgage lift!
'Tis burnt before our eyes."
- Such blessings as in showers fell
On that sobbing maiden's head
Not tongue or pen of mine can tell,
Nor the loving things they said.
- And now (this is a wondrous night!)
At the door a step is heard.
The three spring upright, still and white,
And gaze, but speak no word.
- So gaunt, so pale his visage shows—
'Tis John, and yet not he—
Till close he comes, and, laughing, throws
His arms around the three.
- "And so you thought me dead"—(at last)—
" 'Twas fever, and not the cold,
That laid me low and held me fast,
In the far-off land of gold.
- "The mortgage? It went up in flame?
Sorry for that," he said.
- "No matter, though; 'tis all the same—
To-morrow it shall be paid."
- The curtain falls. No need to tell
Of the joyous feast that night;
Of the thankful hymns that rose and fell;
Of the maiden's shy delight;
Or how, ere closed another day,
The rich man was paid in gold;
Or how he gave his daughter away
To a bridegroom frank and bold.

Good Night.

Come nearer; I would feel your loving presence;
While closer, closer drops a shadowy wing
Not to be lifted more. Loop up the curtain.
So; for I would look once more upon the spring.
And catch her warm, bright smile before I go.
And 'tis the last, last time you know.

See, love, how softly gleams the golden sunset —
How gently doth the day resign its throne!
It seems like faith! As if a gleam of morning
Athwart the night's advancing darkness shone.
And yonder soars a bird: hark! how he sings,
E'en while the cold dews gather on his wings!

So would I sing: as nearer yet and nearer
This last night gathers, and the sun goes down;
But oh, my strength is gone! Sing for me, dearest,
A song about the Day Star and a Crown,
And the near dawn, with its transcendant glow:
It is not far beyond the night, I know.

You cannot sing? and yet you are not weeping:
Your calm is dreadful—like a beaten sea
When first the storm scoops down! the wild recoiling
Of gathered waves will come, and fiercer be
For this dread hush, this anguish still and deep.
There's healing comes of tears—would you could weep!

Grieve not so terribly; this bitter parting
That bows you so is only for a night,
Beyond it lies the radiant To-morrow,
With sweet, clear skies, forever calm and bright.
Then wait in patience: grief is short, and pain,
But joy is long—we shall not part again.

I need not ask that you will not forget me,
 While the world whelms you with its tide of care;
 Your empty arms, I know, will reach to fold me
 Oft in your dreams, and clasp but empty air.

* * * * *

I cannot see you now: fast fades the light—
 Still hold my hand—now kiss me—so, good night.

The Stepmother.

Bride of a week, my arms, unused to holding,
 Clasp a bright boy that sits upon my knee:
 And to my neck a brown-haired girl is clinging,
 Calling me mamma—strange it seems to me!

The boy's brown eyes look up to mine in wonder
 To see the tears fall softly, one by one,
 Upon his shining curls. I fold him closer,
 And ponder well my work, just begun.

Oh, what am I, that I have undertaken
 This thing so great, and that so few can do—
 Always to act the mother true and tender,
 Without the throbbing bliss that mother's know!

And this is why I sit here softly weeping,
 One clinging to my neck, one to my knee:
 Trembling lest human weakness shrink and falter,
 Thinking they have no mother now but me!

* * * * *

Another twilight. Springs have bloomed and faded.
 Long summers trailed their glory o'er the land:
 Again I sit and think. A tall young stripling
 Kneels at my side, and closely clasps my hand.

The same brown eyes, alight with loving glances,
The same bright curls that decked the baby boy—
And fair eighteen, with merry, teasing kisses,
Toys with my hair, and laughs in girlish joy.

They say that I have been a faithful mother,
They say that I have done my duty well.
And yet I know—which they do not—the failures,
The staggering weakness that no tongue can tell!

Adown the backward years so many errors
Start up to view before my searching eyes!
I know that I have not been always tender,
Always unselfish, nor yet always wise.

But one has stood, a tower of strength beside me—
He for whose sake I took my work to do.
When for an hour I have failed and faltered,
His arm upbore, his love sustained me through.

And now, e'en knowing, as I know the failures,
The war with self, the faith oft faint and dim;
Could all these years be blotted—were I standing
Unfettered, free, still would I dare—for him.

The Fields of Corn.

The harvest ends, and the song of the reaper
Dies away to its closing strain.

Skies of the midsummer, hotter and deeper,
Bend over shorn fields and shocks of grain.

Fierce is the breath of the July weather;
Tropic heats on the wind are borne;
The grass and the clover are dying together;
Yet brave and green stands the fields of corn.

Brave and green, and with banners streaming,
Wooing the breezes at hottest noon;
Wider flung when the world is dreaming,
Spreading broadly beneath the moon.

The days are cloudless, the air aquiver,
Palpatant, pulsing with waves of heat;
Crispy the aspen leaves quake and shiver,
The cracked earth scorches unwary feet.

The brown thrush, silent, flits through the hedges,
Mute in their coverts the wood-birds hide;
Farther the creek shrinks back from its edges,
The springs cease flowing, the wells are dried.

Still, while the grass and clover are dying,
With strong roots deep in the prairie's breast,
Plumed and tassled with banners flying,
The tall corn tosses each lordly crest.

Enter the field, a forest hangs over;
Seen from above, 'tis a dark green sea,
Gleaming with lights where the sun, like a lover,
Showers his kisses so fierce and so free.

Lo, through the cornfields a miracle passes,
Vainly attempted by magic of old.

Sunlight and salts and invisible gasses
Here are transmitted to bars of gold.

Triumph of alchemy: daily and nightly
Wrought on the silence before our eyes,
Miracle, yet do we note it lightly;
Wonders familiar wake no surprise.

Sole dependence of many a toiler,
Watching the night, noon and morn skies,
Fearing, trembling, lest the drouth, the spoiler,
Sear with hot fingers the fields of corn.

Still, as yet, while the clover is dying,
While the buds fall dead e'er the flowers are born,
With life intact, and with banners flying,
Green and beautiful stands the corn.

To Mary.

My heart is back in the past, to-night,
As I sit in the twilight dim and pale;
The wide, brown prairie is vanished quite,
And another land steals on my sight,
With wooded hill-top and sheltered vale.

Down in the hollow a village lies,
With its peaceful dwellings white and brown:
And I see, as I scan it with loving eyes—
Save here and there some slight surprise—
But little change in the dear old town.

Yet some dear faces I see not there—
Faces of friends that I used to know—
Some that were dark and some that were fair.
I miss them sore, and I question where
Are those that I loved, long, long ago.

Up on a hillside, near the town,
In a silent city, with portals low,
Under creeping grasses, now sear and brown,
Under soft, gray mosses, that long have grown,—
Here lie some that I used to know.

And you—O, friend, whom I loved so well,
Whom still I have loved, through all these years!
Your heart has bled, while a sorrowful knell
Slowly throbbed from the old church bell.
You have shed in loneliness bitter tears.

And how fare you now? Is life still sweet?
When the sun set did the stars arise?
Are the paths made smooth for your willing feet?
Are you strong the allotted task to meet?
Has the smile returned to your lips and eyes?

Would I could see you, and clasp your hand,
And look in your face as I used to do!
But swollen rivers, mighty and grand,
And many and many a league of land,
Between us lie, while I question you.

The Tower of Silence.

High on the cool, green summit of a hill
That crowns a footspur of the Western Ghauts,
There stands a lonely tower. A grove of palms
Clusters about its foot, and far below
The warm waves lap the gorgeous tropic shore
Of rich Bombay. Strong, close-clamped iron bars,
Netted and intersected, crown its top.
And deep and dark beneath there sleeps a well.

This strange, weird thing—this high and silent tower,
That looks down on the city and the sea—
Is not a temple, nor a monument,
Nor yet is it a seat where telescopes
Are pointed skyward. 'Tis a common tomb!

Here, while the fetid flame of Hindoo pyres
Blaze on the plains below, and while the sea
Utters its solemn dirges by the shore,
The Parsees bring their dead. No graves are dug;
No cool, fresh turf, in its soft tenderness,
About the sleeper flings its garments green.
Here, high in the air, beneath the solemn stars,
With faces smiling ghastly to the moon—
Now bathed in night dews, now in noontide heats—
Lie in grim state the devotees of fire.
Glowing upon the reeking forms, the sun
Shines fiercely down—the god, before whose shrine,
In life they bowed, in death are offered up.

But hungry ghouls swoop down upon the dead,
And, fiercely screaming, claim a ghastly share.
Vultures and eagles, every bird of prey
That haunts the crags of the wild Ghautian hills,
Here feed and fatten on the dreadful feast.
And when the sun, the dews and mountain winds,

Have ended the dread work the birds began,
When the slow-working fingers of decay
Have crumbled up the bleached and naked bones,
There is the well below: and, piece by piece,
They drop into its bosom, dark and deep;
This is the secret of the Silent Tower:—

Ajalee was a Parsee bride, beloved
And beautiful. Her husband clung to her
With passionate devotion—yet she died.
So had he loved her that the awful thought
Of giving up the form his arms had clasped
To the fierce talons of the screaming birds
Seemed horrible to him. So, when he laid
His lovely sleeper on the Silent Tower
With a last kiss, love formed its skillful plan.
He built about her a close netted screen,
At which the hungry claws might tear in vain;
Then left her to the moon and midnight stars;
To the soft washings of the tropic rain;
The mountain winds, and the sweet, sacred sun.

Good Luck.—A Christmas Ballad.

“What! marry my daughter?—you, sir?—
A clerk, with only your pay?
Your cheek is something amazing!
Enough. I’ve no more to say.”

“One moment—your daughter loves me,
I am strong, and willing to work.
Wealth may be won, and honor—
And I’m not the one to shirk.”

The banker rose up in anger—
“No more of this folly, I say!
Be gone! but another word, sir,
And you lose your place to-day.”

* * * * *

The vault of the bank at midnight,
At midnight dark and cold;
The cashier hastily filling
A grip with the bags of gold.

A deep voice close beside him—
“Throw up your hands or die!”
He turned, faced a pistol’s muzzle,
And a stern, commanding eye.

Frighted, pallid, and nerveless,
No strength to resist had he,
While his limbs were bound and fettered
As firmly as firm could be.

The news flew through the city—
Men said, “’Twas a brave night’s work!”
A man had grown suddenly famous—
Young Oscar, the banker’s clerk.

Walking the streets at midnight,
Restless with love's despair,
He had seen the sly thief enter—
Had followed, and caught him there.

* * * * *

In the banker's sumptuous dwelling
The Christmas feast was spread.
Beside the host stood Oscar,
The taller by half a head.

The banker turned, and, taking
The young man's trembling hand,
Through the great rooms he led him—
Through doors by arches spanned—

To where his dark eyed daughter
By her white-haired mother stood;
And smiled as the lovers' faces
Flushed red with warm young blood.

Then said he to young Oscar,
As he joined their throbbing hands,
"Choice is the gift I give you,
Yet my debt uncanceled stands.

"Therefore, besides my daughter,
I give you a post of trust,
The cashier's place left vacant
Is yours—it is but just."

A silence deep had fallen
O'er all that brilliant throng,
But now the hush was broken
By cheers both loud and long.

Astonished at the honors
Thus showered on his head,
Stood Oscar, modest, blushing,—
" 'Twas just good luck," he said.

" My Darling."

" My darling," sweetest name that ever fell,
Laden with tenderness from human lips,
No other can so stir the heart's deep well,
So send the warm blood to the finger-tips.

Love's deepest speech is short, its words are few;
When most there is to say, oft least is said.
A clasp, a silent look that thrills one through,
A kiss, " my darling "—thus two hearts are wed.

" My darling "—spoken oft with tender tears
Under the soft hush of a summer night,
Forgotten oft, alas! in after years
When beauty dims and rosy cheeks grow white.

But sometimes love grows brighter for its wear.
Like unmixed gold—gaining a deeper glow
For the slow friction of life's toil and care,
I know that God, who made us, meant it so.

" My darling "—when the locks are thin and gray,
And when life's sun hangs low—is well-nigh set,
And youth, with all its dreams, is far away.
Then blest are they who hear and say it yet.

A Sweet Woman.

I know her well,—a thing that few can say—
So far within the shade her quiet life,
So softly flow its tides from day to day,
So gently do its hidden fountains play.
And she—she is a mother and a wife.

What is she like? Ah, that I do not know.
I scarce can tell the color of her eyes,
So changeful are the lights that come and go—

Now a quick sparkle, now a thoughtful glow—
But always tender sweetness in them lies.

Beautiful?—why, yes, if beauty is a thing
That one can feel and lean one's heart upon;
Beauty of form and hue not now I sing.
Her beauty is that which soon takes wing,
And leaves but ugliness when youth is gone.

Her hands are lovely, yet they are not white,
Nor even small. Their beauty each one sees
Who feels their ministrations deft and light.
I think they are the fairest in the night,
Cooling some hot brow, soothing pain to ease.

She is a queen; and yet no jewelled crown
Enfolds the soft bands of her shining hair.
Love is her coronet. Hands hard and brown,
And tiny baby fingers, clasp it down.
Methinks that is the holiest crown to wear.

Silent her work, and all unknown to fame.
Of loud, for sounding praise she never dreams.
The world's great trumpeter's know not her name.
Her steady light is no wide-flaring flame;
'Tis but a fireside lamp, that softly gleams.

I do not know—I think her way is best.
Her husband trusts her, and her children rise
With sweetly smiling lips, and call her blest.
She does her duty, leaves to God the rest.
She is not great, but, surely she is wise.

The Summer's Tale Is Told.

The twilight ends: the last faint crimson stain
Has faded from the west; the deep blue sky,
Deeper and darker grows, and once again
God's lamps are lighted in the dome on high.
Above yon distant swell, where trailing clouds
Hung low and black at noon,
Now, round and red, from out their torn white shrouds,
Steps forth the harvest moon.

Thus she came forth last night, thus will she come
The next night and the next. Oh, magic time!
The full moon wanes not at the harvest home,
And night's grand poem flows in even rhyme.
Silent the thresher stands, where hills of gold,
Heaped high on earth's shorn breast,
Loom in the moonlight. Summer's tale is told;
The sickle lies in rest.

The night has wondrous voices. At my door
I sit and listen to its many tones.
The wind comes through the trees with muffled roar.
And round the moonlit gables sadly moans.
The raccoon scouts among the stricken corn
With disappointed cry;
A dismal owl sends out his note forlorn:
One whippowil sings nigh.

And there is other music. All the grass
Is peopled with a crowd of tiny things;
We see them not, yet crush them as we pass.
These sing all night, and clap their puny wings:
Beneath my very feet calls clear and strong
A cricket, slyly hid,
While at my elbow—well I know his song—
Rattles a katydid.

Poor, puny things! your gala nears its end.
A subtle change steals over vale and hill;
There comes a hint of autumn in the wind
That moans about the roof; the nights are chill;
Short and yet shorter grows each passing day;—
The year is waxing old.
The frost waits in the north, not far away—
The summer's tale is told.

Kansas, the Prairie Queen.

In the heart of the country we love so well,
Two mighty oceans midway between,
On grassy plain and on billowy swell,
Sits in her beauty the Prairie Queen.

She hears not the song of the solemn sea,
Nor the roar of eataracts mountain-born;
No lofty peaks, rock-ribbed has she,
With white hoods piercing the clouds of morn.

No white sails glide over lakes asleep;
She boasts no placers of golden sands.
Her ships are the "schooners" that westward creep,
And her richest mines are her fertile lands.

For aught she lacketh—this Prairie Queen—
Aught of mountain, or lake or sea,—
There are wide, wine plains and billows green—
Room for uncounted hosts has she.

Her soil is deep and her winds blow free;
There are belts of timber and quiet creeks;
And rivers at brow, at breast, and knee,
Fed by the snows on western peaks.

God made the land, and man makes the State,
As the hand of the Maker has made her fair,

So honest labor has made her great,
And wrought the robes she was born to wear.

There was once a time—not so long ago—
When all this land was a grassy sea,
Shook by the tramp of the buffalo,
Trode on by savages fierce and free.

Another time. On the winds was born
A cry for help—when the settlers stood
Battling for freedom—when, rent and torn,
She was christened with fire and baptized in blood.

Flame, and rope, and bullet, and knife
Did their work, while the world looked on;
But the fair young State came out of the strife
Famous, glorious—for Freedom won.

There were heroes then; and we see to-day
What a rich growth sprang where their blood was sown—
Why slavery trembled—for these were they
Who drove the wedge that toppled her throne.

Dark days and stern! remembered still
By pleasant fireside, by peaceful stream,
As one remembers with shuddering thrill
The horror and fright of some evil dream.

With "Bleeding Kansas" how fares it now?
Her cup of plenty, her smile serene,
She sits at peace with untroubled brow,
She is rich, she is great, she is crowned a Queen!

Her prairies are decked with peaceful homes,
Nestled, like dove-cotes, in clumps of green;
Fair cities rise with their spires and domes,
And reaches of railway stretched between.

The cattle by thousands that dot her plains,
The stacks, like tents, on her bosom borne;

The grain sacks, heaped on the loaded wains;
Her stately forests of ripening corn;

Her quarries, where palaces, towers and spires
Wait but the hands and the skill to form;
The masses of coal, which feed the fires
That drives her engines and keeps her warm;—

All these are wealth; yet a greater wealth
She holds in her children—her boys and girls—
Their faces bright with the tints of health.
With their laughing eyes and their tossing curls.

The country boy with the bare, brown feet,
Tripping to school with his books and slate,
May climb some day to the highest seat—
In some great crisis may save the state.

Little he thinks, at his books or play,
While the warm blood mantles his "cheek of tan,"
Of the work of the years that stretch away;
Yet the careless boy is the coming man.

And the little girl, with her dimples sweet,
Her red lips fresh as the morning dew,
Her silvery laugh, and her dancing feet,
Is the coming woman, tender and true.

The boy, the girl, in their childish grace
Conning their school tasks, day by day—
These are they who shall take our place,
When we are at rest and laid away.

We are proud of Kansas, the beautiful Queen,
And proud are we of her fields of corn;
But a nobler pride than these, I ween,
Is our pride in her children, Kansas born!

Choice.

Fair and sweet is the face of a child,
Where sin has left no trace;
Lovely the brow uncovered by care,
And the fresh lips' smiling grace;
Sweet as the dawn are the clear young eyes,
Where trouble has found no place.

Yet 'tis a world of trouble and care,
Where the child has entered in;
A world of toil and of eager strife,
Where only the brave may win;
A world where the wicked watch for prey:
A world that is dark with sin.

O children, innocent ones!
Life is not what it seems
To you —at play on its border land,
Or smiling in rosy dreams—
'Tis no soft vale, where the lotus rocks
On bosoms of silent streams.

Life is a battle and all must fight,
Who would sing the victor's song;
Life is a race and the goal is far—
If happen that life be long—
Yet is the race not all to the swift,
And the battle is not to the strong.

Who, then, shall win in the race, in the fight:
He who is steady and true:
Who gives the best of his heart and soul
To the good that he finds to do;
By naught dismayed and by naught seduced
Constant his whole life through.

Steadfastly treading the old, old way
That the faithful have trod before:

Patiently sealing the same rough steps,
 Bearing the cross you bore:—
Ever with face set toward the gates
 That gleam on the shining shore.

Steadfastly battle without
 And steadfastly foes within—
For never human hearts, but feel
 Some taint of its origin—
Triumphant now, now weeping sore,
 And crying, "forgive my sin."

Soldier is he with no bannered pride,
 Nor in gorgeous trappings dressed,
No boom of cannon, no trumpet blast,
 No tossing plumed crest—
Are heard or seen on the field of strife
 That lies in his throbbing breast.

Such is he, and such is the life
 Of many a striving one—
Hunted, buffeted, snare beset;
 Wounded, yet pressing on:—
Little he knows of peace or rest,
 Till the war is over and done.

Ever for model the perfect Christ—
 Though he but half attain:—
Perfect never, yet, scanned beside
 A life of need and gain.
A selfish pleasure, of slothful ease,
 How grand his toil and pain;

You are young, and careless, and gay—
 Standing where two roads meet—
Choose, ere the evil days draw nigh,
 Whither shall land your feet!
Time has wings, and the years sweep on
 And life is but frail and fleet.

Choose! Will you take for guide or friend
The teacher of Gallilee—
Loving, forgiving, denying self,
Bidding the Tempter flee;
Treading the billows when passion is high,
As Jesus trod on the sea?

Can you? and will you? oh, but try,
Falling, yet try again,
On the wreck of to-day's defeat,
Build for to-morrow's gain,
Effort is noble;—Striving still,
Ye shall not strive in vain.

Out West.

"Westward ho!" comes ringing from the throat of "The
Pioneer"—

A paper run by the railroads out on the great frontier,
Wanted, a mighty army to settle the rolling flat,
That lies, like a garden of Eden, along the beautiful Platte.

Wanted, women and children, bearded and stalwart men,
From stern New England hillside, from rugged and rocky
glen:

From steepes of the Alleghanies, where bleak winds fiercely
blow,

And down whose slopes of hard-pan roll storms of sleet and
snow.

Wanted—to settle the prairies! and still the call is heard—
Irish, Norwegian, German—but Yankee blood preferred.

Wanted—and who would linger on patches stony and steep,
When a wide realm lies before him, with soil both rich and
deep?

Good Pioneer, Sir Railroad, all that you say is true,
And wondrous fair the picture that you are holding up to
view;

But is it straight and honest, and is it fair and right,
That only the good is shown us, and the bad left out of
sight?

'Tis true, a careless mention of the "hopper" here is made,
As something rare and seldom, like fire, or Indian raid;
But naught of the summer droughts, and not the faintest
breath
Concerning the western "blizzard," that awful blast of
death.

No record how the farmer, amid the rush and roar,
All blinded and bewildered, sinks down beside his door;
Sinks freezing at his threshold with unavailing moan—
For the voices of the tempest outspoke his dying groan—

If the half we are to credit of the shuddering settler's tale,
Of the tempest swift and sudden, of the icy, blinding veil,
Then, to a western blizzard, with its rush and its deadly
sting,
A storm of the Alleghanies is the flap of a pigeon's wing.

A spectre stalks the prairies, a spectre gaunt and grim,
Scattering woe and famine, and waste of cheek and limb,
There is freezing, there is starving, while rings the cheery
call.

"Wanted—five hundred thousand!"—Do they think us id-
iots all?

Wants.

"Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long."
A gentle, genial bard was he
Who put that in his song.

It should have been some Anchorite,
Who, bound his flesh to slaughter,
Employed his days in counting beads,
And lived on roots and water.

He must have had, it seems to me,
A most contented mind,
And must have known but little of
That genus called mankind.

Who little wants, nor wants that long,
Is only half a human.
Man's wants are many, and, I own,
'Tis much the same with woman.

For instance I—and I suppose
That I am like the rest—
Have many wants that stir and fret
In my unquiet breast.

So many minus quantities
Come into my equation,
To name them all would go beyond
The scope of numeration.

I want my daily bread—and that
Includes a bill of fare
That, for its comprehensiveness,
Would make our poet stare.

Not all the fruits of every clime
Were I content with having;
Not all the cooks of all the world
Could satisfy my craving.

I want the strongest kinds of meats
To fill my larder lean;
I want the words of all the wise
That are or eye have been.

And then I want the power to choose
From out the vast collation;
I want to know, where now I toss
In doubt and speculation.

I want, beside, such solid fare,
All tender household words,
I want the lays of poets and
The songs of summer birds.

And then I want my friends—a few
Who know me well, yet love me,
And who, should swift disaster come,
Would not be sure to shove me.

I want both will and strength to rise
Above all hurtful things:
I want to be an angel—but
I was not born with wings.

I want—but it occurs to me
That space and type are finite.
Should I go on, the printer would
“ Respectfully decline ” it.

Westward.

When eastern snows are melting and the south wind softly
blows,

The old hives swarm, and westward the Star of Empire goes.
“Westward ho!” is ever the watchword of the spring:
As sure as birds fly northward, is this a settled thing.

’Tis heard again in autumn, when crops are gathered in—
When the corn is in the barn and the wheat is in the bin.
Westward, and ever westward, the long, white wagons creep,
Through towns and open country, and forests dark and deep.

Westward—women and children, bearded and stalwart
men—

From stern New England hillside, from wild and rocky glen:
From steepes of the Alleghanies, where bleak winds fiercely
blow;

And down whose crags of granite roll storms of sleet and
snow.

Westward—from o’er the ocean a crowd comes pressing on,
Russian, Norwegian, German—all bloods under the sun
Here meet and mingle kindly. As all the world doth know,
When other lands are full, hither rolls the overflow.

Westward, and ever westward, the peaceful army comes—
Workmen for better wages, the homeless seeking homes;
Young men—life all before them, with all that life endears—
And old men, faint and weary, with the bootless toil of
years.

Still they come, and still we greet them with the clasp of
friendly hand;

Still they flood and swell our cities, still they spread across
the land:

Westward, westward—led or followed by the headlight’s
ghostly gleam.

While lonely wilds are startled by the engine’s eerie scream.

On bare, wide slopes the dug-out yields shelter safe and sure,
And from its fireside altar floats incense sweet and pure.
Beside the lowly door sits the grandsire old and gray,
While round him, tanned and merry, the barefoot children
 play.

The sod, upturned, woos surely the sunshine and the rain:
Anon the swells are golden with seas of waving grain.
Where all was bare and barren, thick stand the clustered
 sheaves;
Where all was bare and treeless, winds whisper through the
 leaves.

Towns spring as by enchantment along the great frontier:
Where the owl dwelt silent, solemn, with the prairie dog
 last year,
Now stands the store and school house, and church with
 steeple white.
In a city reared by magic, like the gourd that grew in a
 night.

Farmer Jones On Inflation.

So the law is passed. I suppose it's no use to talk,
And I'm not a public man—I travel a private walk.
But, all the same, I should like to say my say,
Although my way of speaking is a homely way.

Slowly I follow my plow, and think and think,
And it seems to me there's somewhere a missing link.
I read the papers and speeches that come to hand,
But something looks dark; I cannot quite understand.

Softly the lawyers talked on the capitol floor,
(How tender-hearted they were!) of the suffering poor.
Money! to pay the workingmen, starving for bread!
Money! to save the dying and bury the dead!

To the farmer was promised a new and a dawning day;
Fair prices for produce, where now he but gives away:
More he should get for his wheat, his corn and rye,
But nothing they said of things he would have to buy.

If wheat goes up, but little's the good to me,
If up with a jerk goes sugar, and coffee and tea;
I have to pay more for a reaper, a horse, or a hand,
And, if I am homeless, more for a house and land.

"Inflation is sparkling wine," some one has said.
"If it starts up the pulse and blood of sluggish trade,"
But wine is a mocker; we dream we are rich and great;
Then comes the drunken panic; then—why, we *re-inflate*.

Inflation is gas! and up and away, to the tune
Of forty-four millions, soars Uncle Sam's balloon.
But a storm is ahead; the dark skies scowl and frown,
And, stripped and riddled, the thing has got to come down.

Such are my thoughts, as I toil for my daily bread,
And follow the clean-cut furrow with steady tread.
I am not skilled in the hidden tricks of the law,
But I've learned to trace a current by the course of a straw.

The Renter's Exodus.

It was near the end of winter and mild as mild could be,
When a renter started westward with wife and children
three.
Going forth to seek a homestead on the prairies bare and
lone—
For the poor man hungered sorely for a place to call his
own.

The wind blew soft and balmy, the day was bright and
fair;
The spring was stealing northward and her breath was in
the air.
Like starting on a picnic—so high their spirits rose—
Seemed that journey's fair beginning—could they have
seen its close!

Slow crept the wagon westward. A week of pleasant days,
Then came one dark gray morning. A strangely brooding
haze
Hung o'er the lonely country, its curtain vague and dim.
And hid the palid sunlight and hid the prairie's rim.

"Best stay in cover stranger, I'm sure you're welcome
quite."
Thus spoke the kind old farmer where they had spent the
night.
"That gray film over yonder, that queer look in the sky—
I know the signs; then tarry, and let the storm go by."

With thanks for proffered kindness, they still must needs
be gone.
'Twas 'not so bad a morning, when all was said and done.
Alas for rash impatience; it can not brook to wait,
But shuts its eyes all blindly and rushes on its fate.

Slow crept the wagon westward; and still that filmy veil
Hung o'er the red-brown prairie, so ghastly, dim and pale.
A sound like rushing pinions—a moment, and no more—
Then came the freezing norther, with savage shriek and
 roar.

Cold blew the wind, and colder, like bits of sharpened
 stone,
The fine snow pierced their garments and chilled them to
 the bone.
Out on the lonely prairie, that seemed of life bereft—
Alack! and O! alack for the shelter they had left.

The early twilight fell and night was closing fast,
When through the swirling tempest they spied a light at
 last.
The children tried to shout with their numb and stiffened
 lips,
And clapped their little hands with the freezing finger tips.

'Twas the dwelling snug and warm of a farmer well-to-do.
"Can we stop here for the night, and till the storm is
 through?"
In the doorway stood the speaker, a vision wild and weird,
With white frost on his eyebrows, and ice hung on his
 beard.

As he spoke he glanced within at the warm and lamplit
 room.
At the young and comely woman, at the children in their
 bloom.
Never doubting of the answer, full trusting—more the
 shame—
To him, the stony hearted, from whom the answer came.
"I don't keep tavern, stranger, and spare room have we
 none;
You'll find a place, I reckon, some three miles further on."

No other word was spoken; the poor man turned away
With pale lips tense and set, and with face of ashen gray.

No time was there for parley, and no use had there been;
He saw no ray of pity in the gaze so cold and keen.
He rushed back to the wagon; said, "three miles yet to go!"
He had found that human hearts could be colder than the
snow.

The children huddled closer, the shivering mother pressed
Beneath her shawl the youngest still closer to her breast.
One sad, resentful look towards the warm and glowing
light,
And the man whipped up his horses, so they passed into the
night.

Through the storm and drift and darkness did the swaying
wagon reel.
While the farmer asked a blessing on the smoking evening
meal.

Later, he read his bible (the cruel hypocrit!)
And prayed for preservation from the dangers of the
night.

* * * * *

On hard drifts, pure and sparkling, the sun shone calmly
down,
When a chilling, startling item was wired from town to
town,
"A family found frozen." Then, later, it was told
How a farmer had refused them a shelter from the cold.

The farmer—now how fares he? Mayhap he prospers still,
With corn heaped in his cribs, and with money in his till;
But I wonder if his pulses do always calmly beat,
And if his food is pleasant, and if his sleep is sweet.

In Memoriam.

Fast falls the night. The bleak December wind
In fitful gusts sweeps o'er a lowly bed
Made but to-day. A true heart and a kind
Lies still and pulseless, she, our friend, is dead.

A few hours since, I stood, with tear-wet eyes,
And looked upon her, placid in her sleep,
Longing to whisper to her, loving-wise,
But silence wrapped her, I could only weep.

I loved her well, and never let her know,
Nor sought her side to soothe the pain she bore,
By word or touch, or aught that friend could do.
Now 'tis too late—and oh! it grieves me sore.

O friend, had I but known that on thy brow
Death had its signet set, and marked his own!
But bitter tears are unavailing now,
In vain regret. O friend, had I but known!

We speak of what she was, how tender, true,
How loving, loyal, to her friends, how dear,
Tell to each other her sweet story through,
In voices low—alas! she cannot hear.

The night grows darker; still the cold winds moan.
For me repeating but one sad refrain,
I seem to hear, in every mournful tone
Only the bitter wail—"In vain, in vain."

Summer,

The trailing skirts of the summer
Have swept away to the south —
A blast came down from the northland
And kissed her on the mouth.

She fled from the kiss that chilled her,
From the touch of a frosty hand;
But the work of her busy fingers
Is strewn all over the land.

Wrought she well in the sunshine,
And wrought she well in the rain;
For the corn hangs thick and heavy,
And the garner are filled with grain.

Busy was she in the orchards —
The rich fruit swings o'erhead,
While the low boughs, overladen,
Lie prone on the paths we tread.

Peaches with coats of velvet;
Apples in satin fine;
Purple grapes by the river,
Where the great coils twist and twine.

For these do we bless the summer,
So fervid, and strong, and sweet;
Autumn but touches and ripens
As he follows her flying feet.

Then sing, oh! sing her praises,
Ye singers with throats in tune;
While the fruit and corn hang heavy,
All under the harvest moon.

“ Poetic Pies.”

From the oven hot and steaming,
With the ruby bubbles gleaming,
As they boil up through the craters in little puffs and sighs,
There's resistless invitation
To the palate's delectation
In the odor and the look of those “poetic” cherry pies.

Oh, their juice than wine is richer!
It is poured from out the pitcher
Where is stored the luscious nectar distilled at summer's
prime.
Show these pies to Doctor Tanner,
He would forthwith strike his banner
And put off the fasting racket to a more convenient time.

At the long day's slow expiring,
At the still hour of retiring,
Would you woo such sleep as cometh with dreams of lurid
dye?
Then eat a “heavenly doughnut,”
Looped up in a double bow-knot,
A slice of bread “angelic,” and a piece of cherry pie.

But if, instead of dreaming,
Your brain with thought is teeming,
And you wish to make a strike in the paragraphic line,
Then avoid the heavenly doughnut,
Looped up in a double bow-knot,
And likewise the pie poetic, O dear Del Valentine!

Smiles.

Some monstrous moralist lays down this rule
Among the maxims: "Always wear a smile.
He must have learned it in some Jesuit school,
Where deepest wisdom is but deepest guile.
Who would obey must set himself the task—
A hateful one—to always wear a mask.

Your constant smiler is a hypocrite,
'Tis evil that must hide, not honesty,
He whose expression always wears a bit,
A very prince in wickedness may be.
"A man may smile and be a villain still;"
And he who *always* smiles, be sure he *will*.

A smile is lovely when, through lip and eye,
The sunny sweetness of a soul shines out,
Like a quick glimpse of glory; 'tis a lie
When inner darkness it but wraps about.
Night rules us all at times; shall we, the while,
Hide our sad midnight with a morning smile?

Our faces are our windows. Is it meet
That one should always keep his curtains down?
When smiles are but the draping of deceit,
Better, far better, were an honest frown.
By semblance falsely sweet sin hides its art—
Only from men—God looketh on the heart.

Only One.

Only one heart to beat with mine—
That heart to be loving, and warm, and true,
Shedding its tenderness, rich as wine
Pressed from grapes of the Rhenish vine,
Yet delicate, pure, as morning dew.

Only one arm to lean upon,
As I thread the gorges, or mount the steeps—
To steady me when the heights are won,
To pillow my head when the day is done,
And over my eyes the darkness creeps.

Only one love, told o'er and o'er—
That love to be quenchless—a deathless flame—
Yet, like the ocean that laps the shore
In a thousand forms and ten thousand more,
To be ever changing, yet ever the same!

Only one love—do I smile or weep,
Do I float with the current, or bravely swim
Against wind and tide—still let me keep,
While the years drift by in their onward sweep,
But this, when life and its hopes grow dim.

One other love! To its breadth is this
As a rift in a cloud to the boundless blue—
As a passionate, transient throb of bliss
To infinite billows of happiness—
To boundless seas as a drop of dew!

Keep Your Temper.

It never did, and never will,
Put things in better fashion,
Though rough the road, and steep the hill,
To fly into a passion.

And never yet did fume or fret
Mend any broken bubble:
The direst evil, bravely met,
Is but a conquered trouble.

Our trials - did we only know—
Are often what we make them;
And mole-hills into mountains grow,
Just by the way we take them.

Who keeps his temper, calm and cool,
Will find his wits in season;
But rage is weak, a foaming fool,
With neither strength nor reason.

And if a thing be hard to bear
When nerve and brain are steady,
If fiery passions rave and tear,
It finds us maimed already.

Who yields to anger conquered lies—
A captive none can pity;
Who rules his spirit, greater is
Than he who takes a city.

A hero he, though drums are mute,
And no gay banners flaunted;
He treads his passions under foot,
And meets the world undaunted.

Oh, then, to bravely do our best,
Howe'er the winds are blowing;
And meekly leave to God the rest,
Is wisdom worth the knowing!

Little Things.

We call him strong who stands unmoved—
Calm as some tempest-beaten rock—
When some great trouble hurls its shock:
We say of him, his strength is proved;
But, when the spent storm folds its wings,
How bears he then Life's little things?

About his brow we twine our wreath
Who seeks the battle's thickest smoke,
Braves flashing gun and sabre-stroke,
And scoffs at danger, laughs at death;
We praise him till the whole land rings;
But—is he brave in little things?

We call him great who does some deed
That echo bears from shore to shore,—
Does that, and then does nothing more:
Yet would this work earn richer meed,
When brought before the King of kings,
Were he but great in little things.

We closely guard our castle-gates
When great temptations loudly knock,
Draw every bolt, clinch every lock,
And sternly fold our bars and gates:
Yet some small door wide open swings
At the sly touch of little things!

I can forgive—'tis worth my while—
The treacherous blow, the cruel thrust:
Can bless my foe, as Christians must,
While Patience smiles her royal smile:
Yet quick resentment fiercely slings
Its shots of ire at little things.

And I can tread beneath my feet
The hills of Passion's heaving sea,
When wind-tossed waves roll stormily:
Yet scarce resist the siren sweet
That at my heart's door softly sings
"Forget, forget Life's little things."

But what is Life? Drops make the sea;
And petty cares and small events,
Small causes and small consequents.
Make up the sum for you and me:
Then, O for strength to meet the stings
That arm the points of little things!

My Wild Rose.

I had a garden, which I kept
With busy hands and tender care;
And once, while carelessly I slept,
Fanned softly by the drowsy air,
A wild rose to my garden crept,
And blossomed there.

O, sweet surprise. It seemed to me,
Some fair hand, my heart to bless,
Had brought it there, from wood or lee.
It came unsought—'twas loved no less;
I stooped and touched it tenderly,
With soft caress.

I grew to love it passing well;
While strange exotics, rich and rare,
With heart of gold and crimson bell,
Paid grudgingly for constant care,
My wild rose, as in a woodland dell,
Bloomed fresh and fair.

I watered not, I did not prune.
I tied it not with cord or thong;
Yet, morn by morn and noon by noon,
Through days of summer, hot and long,
And underneath the midnight moon,
From branches strong—

Hung clustered blossoms sweet and red;
And day by day and week by week,
I trod the path which toward it lead.
Whate'er my mood, I did not speak,
But close against bowed my head
And pressed my cheek.

I think of it with sudden thrill.
Now wide lands lie, deep water flows,
Smiles many a vale, looms many a hill
Between me and the garden-close;
Yet fondly I remember still
My sweet wild rose.

Love.

Fret not if fateful bar
Cause Love's delay,
Nor if some baleful star
Cross love away.
Love crossed is better far
Than Love's decay.

Love hidden in the breast
Is hoarded gold;
By brooding thought caressed,
It ne'er grows old.
Love satisfied, at rest,
Oft waxes cold.

We pity those who part
To meet no more;
We sorrow for the smart,
The aching sore;
The joined, yet twain of heart,
Need pity more.

Two sit at table, where
Love once said grace:
A bond yet holds them there,
Still face to face;
Love, jostled out by Care,
Has fled the place.

There live whose wedding day
Was wreathed in gold;
Who saw time stretch away
With joys untold:
Their lives creep on to-day,
Gray, sad, and cold.

Love, set in daily groove,
Drops its highest mission.
The lives of thousands prove
This hard condition:
The sorest test of Love
Is Love's fruition.

O thou who through long years
Hast dwelt alone,
Whose love, enshrined in tears,
Holds secret throne,
This thought its comfort bears:
'Tis still thine own.

Ye wedded who remain,
(But ye are few)
Through all life's toil and pain,
Warm, tender, true,
Earth holds, on hill or plain,
None blest like you.

The Man for the Hour.

Where shall we seek him? Where well-leagued corruption
Welds its dark compacts in some secret ring;
Where hungry traitors feed upon disruption:
Where Falsehood brews his schemes, and Gold is King?

Not there! The man we want scorns clique and cabal;
On thievish trickery looks sternly down:
Hating a lie, dupe of no specious fable.
Truth is his breastplate, honor is his crown.

He loves his country,—serves her for affection;
Her loaves and fishes enter not his plan;
Firm as a rock, he meets the tides of faction;
Tool of no clique, he fears no party-ban.

He loves his country; so, when tempests lower,
And the ship tosses on a heaving sea;
His be the watch,—his be the gloomy hour,—
For none shall keep the post so well as he.

Trust not the hireling when disasters thicken;
He only cares to cut his loaf of bread,
And coolly sits him down his pay to reckon,
While growling thunders menace overhead.

If great his wisdom, greater still the evil:
A clear, cool head, a gift men's hearts to ruin;
A giant's strength, all bartered to the devil,
Is a great sale, with much, alas! thrown in.

"No man but has his price," said Charles the Second, —
'Twas thus the Royal scoffer sneered his sneer;
But then, no doubt, 'twas by himself he reckoned:
He had his price—or several—that is clear.

Some men have not. Truth is not dead, nor honor.
Let them come forward, boldly take the front,
Hurl their indignant scorn at bribe and donor,
And take, as patriots should, the battle's brunt.

The man we want is brave, is wise, is witty,
With strength to push Corruption to the wall;
Must have for high-bred thieves no breast of pity;
And must *himself* be honest—first of all.

Coming Home.

Home to my mother's door. Push back the lock,
She will not open it—no use to knock.
A weight is on my breast; oh! never yet
Daughter at mother's door such welcome met!

No kiss upon my lips; no word, no sound,
No loving arms reach out to clasp me round,
I cross the threshold to a solemn room,
Peopled with shadows, silent as the tomb.

The heavy air is chill—no fire, no light;
Only pale sunshine, streaming thin and white
Through the bare panes upon the naked floor.
I shrink and shiver—do not shut the door!

Tread lightly on the creaking boards, speak low;
Start not the hollow echoes; well I know
They sleep in every corner. Do not call,
Lest they should answer loudly, one and all.

Her voice is still. 'Twas here I heard it last—
Here by the door. The tears fell thick and fast
From both our eyes; to-day the drops run o'er
From only mine; and she—she weeps no more.

This was her bed-room; it was here, you say,
She laid in silence all that summer day,
With roses (how she loved them!) at her head,
Wreathed on the wall and strewn upon her bed.

Now she lies yonder, and a sombre pall
The dead leaves weave above her as they fall;
The rains that beat, the autumn winds that blow,
Are making ready heavy shrouds of snow.

Whatever covers her, she still sleeps well;
But oh! these silent rooms! I can not tell
Why their cold emptiness should move me so;
I can not bear it longer—let us go.

An Autumn Picture,

The mill turns by the waterfall;
The loaded wagons go and come;
All day I hear the teamster's call,
All day I hear the thresher's hum:
And many a shout and many a laugh
Come breaking through the clouds of chaff.

The brook glides toward the sleeping lake,
Now bubbling over shining stones
Now under clumps of brush and brake,
Hushing its brawls to murmuring tones,
And now it takes its winding path
Through meadows green with aftermath.

The frosty twilight early falls,
But household fires burn warm and red.
The cold may creep without the walls,
And growing things be stark and dead—
No matter, so the hearth be bright
When household faces meet at night.

A Housekeeper's Question.

While autumn tints fleck yonder wood,
And lazy winds are sleeping,
I feel a speculative mood
Come slowly o'er me creeping.
A strong desire within me stirs,
To see some questions settled,
On which the great philosophers
Have long and fiercely battled.
Calm reason now shall have its say,
(Dear me; my bread is burning;
And I am wanted right away,
To see about that churning.)

I sit me down again to think,
Commencing at creation.
I fain would follow, link by link,
The long stretch of graduation.
But that's the trouble—where to find
The first stitch of beginning.
The tangled thread who can unwind
To where commenced the spinning?
What laid first that primordial egg?
From whence came life mending?
(Do, some one, answer this, I beg,
While I—do up my mending.)

Philosophy, that swayed and bent,
Through many a revolution,
Now, calmly settled, spreads its tent,
And rests at Evolution.
But Doubt stands gravely at the door
And puts its puzzling queries.
This question asks (and many more):
What did commence the series?

Did something out of nothing grow?—
 (That soup is boiling over!
On soup depends the peace of home—
 I'll just take off the cover.)

Things are; and on this world, we know,
 Dwells quite a population;
But how came mice and men to grow—
 I give up that equation.
Some other problems stagger me.
 Yon graceless scamp is growing
To just what he was born to be;
 His father set him going;
How far is he to blame if Fate
 Has botched his constitution?—
(There comes a beggar at the gate,
 And wants my contribution.)

Still other things I want to know;
 Why evil tongues are longest,
Why deeds of darkness prosper so;
 Why wicked men are strongest.
And why must life, e'en with the best,
 Be but a constant battle,
With secret foes that never rest
 Until the last death rattle?
Why are the good so sore beset?
 Why is man born a sinner?
(But there's a nearer question yet:
 What shall I get for dinner?)

Foreboding.

I will not look for storms when skies are glowing,
With hues of summer sunsets painted o'er;
When all my tides of life are softly flowing,
I will not listen for the breaker's roar.

I will not search the future for its sorrows,
Nor peer ahead for lions in the way,
I will not weep o'er possible to-morrows—
Sufficient is the evil of to-day.

Leave Me Alone.

Leave me alone. I would not see thee more.
The storm is hushed, the agony is o'er.
I would not feel again
The passion and the pain.
Do not again come knocking at my door.

Leave me alone. Put not into my hand
A broken cup, though bound with golden band,
Lest I with thirsty lip
Once more its passions sip.
Still let it lie, all shattered on the sand.

Leave me alone. I followed, long ago,
Joy to its tomb, with tolling marches slow.
Wake not my buried slain,
Only to die again.
Leave me to peace—'tis all I hope to know.

Leave me alone. I may not quite forget
The buried love, whose sweetness thrills me yet;
But let the willow wave;
Rake not a grass-grown grave;
Break not the turf, for fresh-rung tears to wet.

Moods of March.

Wild is the dance abroad to-night,
As the drifts whirl to and fro;
Loud is the voice of the raging storm:
As the fierce gusts come and go:
Black are the panes where the black night leans
Like a homeless ghost in the snow.

Black are the panes where the black night leans
Within, it is warm and light.
The fire purrs low and the kettle sings,
And the lamps shine soft and bright.
Little care we for the wind and cold.
And little care we for the night.

What is that cry, out-voicing the storm,
That sounds on the drifted plain?
What is that throbbing, thunderous roar?
It is only the midnight train.
Screaming and thundering through the night,
Like a monster mad with pain.

Silent as sleep is the wintry morn;
All spotless the snowdrifts lie;
Pillars of smoke from household fires
Mount straight to the cold, blue sky.
Yonder a "freight" creeps heavy, and slow.
Where the night train thundered by.

Wild was the night, and cold the morn;
It is noon, and the warm wind blows;
The eaves run streams, and under our feet
Is the slush of the melting snow.
Birds are singing, the air is like May,
And the wild geese north-ward go.

Poets, writing your odes to spring—
Your poems of stanzas ten—
Haste to finish, for moods of March
Are changeful as moods of men.
I tried it once, but the wind veered north,
And the ink froze on my pen.

Two Farewells.

I have bidden two of my neighbors
A long farewell to-day.
Both were going on a journey,
And both were going to stay.

One, with eyes that were misty,
Like skies all heavy with rain,
Said, "In the years that are coming,
We may somewhere meet again."

She was bound for Dakotah:
And watching the wagons go—
White-covered, heavily laden,
Clogged with the early snow.

I thought of the bleak, cold prairies,
Of the toil for many a day,
With the storms of wild November
Howling along the way.

The other lay cold and silent:
Said naught, nor clasped my hand;
And we were friends—ah, speechless
Men go to the silent land!

Mute, and pale, and speechless
This wild October day,
He passed down into the shadows—
Into the shadows gray.

And he has finished his journey;
The pain and the toil are o'er;
Nobly he wrought his life-work,
Bravely his burdens bore.

To-night the winds are raving;
The snow falls over his head;
Yet he turns not on his pillow,
Stirs not in his lowly bed.

So gone are two of my neighbors;
Empty their places stand.
One has gone to Dakota,
And one to the silent land.

The Thread of Gray.

I have woven a braid, with patient toil.
'Tis the work of many a day,
There are colors bright, but through them all
Runs a thread of sober gray.

Blue and golden and green and red
I have blended as best I may;
But through them all, and binding them all
Runs the thread of sober gray.

The blue and the gold twine out and in,
Like rainbow tints astray;
Then brilliant strands of green and red—
But always the thread of gray.

And I think how like to an earnest life,
With its pleasures by the way,
While through them all runs a steady aim,
Like a thread of sober gray.

There are lights and laughter and feast and song,
For labor must have its play—
But over and under and through them all
Runs the thread of sober gray.

The mirth shall fail and the lights grow dim,
And the song shall die away;
But the worker's crown shall be his who keeps
To his thread of sober gray.

Alas for him who into his braid
Weaves only the colors gay!
And alas for the close of the human life,
That loses its thread of gray!

Rescue the Perishing.

(Read before a session of the Temple of Honor, in Jefferson
County, Wisconsin.)

Who hath the trembling hand,
And eyes that are rheumy and red?
Who, amid darkness that knows no morn,
Mourns over hopes that are dead?
And who goes staggering by
With weak and tottering feet,
With rags on his back and cheeks aflame,
And hot lips foul with words of shame—
The scoff of the pitiless street?
And who sits, sad and pale,
Beside her desolate hearth—
A wailing babe on her patient knee,
Sick and sad from its birth?
While the heavy hours drag by,
Of what does this watcher think?
Why harks she so as steps go past?
And why, when one step comes at last,
Does she start, and shiver, and shrink?

And one comes tottering in,
With reeking and poisoned breath,
She well may fear, for she knows the work
Of the fiery cup of death.
More than my pen can paint,
This sorrowful woman knows
Of want, of woes like mountains piled,
Of oaths, and curses, and ravings wild.
And the weight of heavy blows.

Reared in a delicate home,
She remembers a happy time,
When days were leaves of a pleasant book
All written in dainty rhyme.
She remembers peaceful nights,
That were blessed with radiant dreams;
And rosy morns, and fleecy skies,
And the tender light in a mother's eyes—
How long ago it seems.

She remembers one day of joy,
When she stood, a white-robed bride,
By the side of one who was more to her
Than all the great world's pride.
She stands beside him now,
Pale with a mortal fear.
Her pinched, wan cheeks grow whiter yet,
Her great wild eyes are fixed and set
On his face so marred and blear.

It has come—that awful scourge,
Whose terrors none can speak—
And the lips that cursed as he crossed the door
Now utter shriek on shriek.
He sees all fearful things!
A serpent crawls at his feet;
The dark panes glow with fierce green eyes,
And in yon dusky corner lies
A corpse in winding-sheet.

He feels on his shrinking cheek
The flapping of goblin wings,
And over his flesh the slimy touch
Of horrible creeping things.
He writhes in the grip of fiends,
That drag him down to hell.
Can naught redeem from a hell like this?
Could an angel's hand or an angel's kiss?
Hark to the tale I tell.

There came to that dread abode—
As come to many another—
Men of a tried and faithful band,
Who look upon man as a brother—
Who look on man as a brother—
However low he may sink;
Who stretch forth pitying hands to save
The fallen from his self-dug grave,
Though he stand at the very brink.
They came with soothing tones,
With fuel, and food, and care;
And strong, brave words of cheerful hope.
For the drunkard's dire despair.
They bore him up in their arms,
They lifted him out of the pit—
And now, in a home of calm content,
Where cheerful labor and rest are blent,
Do peace and plenty sit.

The wife's wan cheek grows red,
And her smile is fair to see;
And a rosy boy, with golden hair,
Climbs to his father's knee.
Brothers! such work as this
Deserves a laurel crown!
For the solemn joy such deeds must bring,
The loftiest genius, the proudest king,
Might well on his knees go down.

Oh, fathers with drunken sons!
Oh, sons with drunken sires!
Would that the bitter tears ye shed
Might quench these hellish fires!
Oh, people, grand and strong!
Arise in your kingly might.
Put from your midst the accursed thing:—
And the dove of peace, with brooding wing,
Shall on your homes alight.

The Snow Blockade.

Blocked is our castle,—sudden siege
We did not count on. All our doors
Are barricaded: loudly roars
The savage wind, and tries its wedge—
Its wedge of ice, with sharpened edge—
Seeking to pierce some open crack.
But, storm our fortress as you may,
And heap the snow with fingers black,
Ye demons,—'tis but idle play.
Gather your forces, fierce and strong:
We toss you back defiant song.

You cannot enter here—nor yet
Can we get out. You've got us there!
No human things to-night would dare
To pass the bounds the storm has set,
And yet, beleagured as we are,
This lamp-lit room serene and still,
Seems like some green and peaceful isle,
Set in a wild and heaving sea.
Strong are our bolts: our oak-wood fire
Beats back the cold. The night is dire
With the black storm, but what care we,
Fenced in our calm security?

Two days and nights:—the storm is done.
The wearied winds have sunk to rest,
Spent with their strife. Earth's frozen breast
Lies heaped with hills beneath the dawn,
The demons of the blast are gone—
Their work remains. The rising sun
Pours forth its light—pale, cold and chill—
Across a waste all dead and still.
No moving thing, no tinkling bells
Forewarn of coming steed and sleigh.
No sign of life, save smoke that swells
From chimney-tops then floats away
Still gripes the cold, with grasp so chill,
We shiver, hug the fire and say,
“No mortal can break roads to-day.”

The cars are blocked as well as we,
No distant roar of passing train
Comes to our ears across the plain.
Silence unbroken! Can it be
That all the world has gone to sleep?
No news—and shut in four square walls!
We wonder how the light goes on
In yonder legislative hills.
And what they do at Washington.
We wonder what new taxes, steep,
It is decreed that we must pay,
Who earn their bread from day to day.

At length the seige is raised.
Past rural palace, past the hovel,
The way is cleared. His name be praised!
Who made that blessed thing a shroud!
Here comes the mail—a basket full.
Now we shall know what wires they pull;
What party rebels bolt the track,
Who smiles with hope, whose brow is black.

Ah, here is what we hoped to see;
Reform has risen, pure and strong,
And tossed her weight upon the scales
Where Right was weighed against the wrong
And lo, another victory!
Send out, send out exultant song
Across Wisconsin's hills and vales.
Sing out the sordid Regency;
Sing out Back Pay and Press Gag Law;
Sing in the pure—hurrah, hurrah.

God Knows.

God only knows what fate the coming morrow
Holds in its close shut hand—
What wave of joy, what whelming tide of sorrow,
May flood my heart's dry land.

But whether laughter, with its bounding billow,
Rolls up in joyous swell,
Or sorrow darkly flows beneath the willow,
I still will say, 'tis well.

And I will strew my seed upon the waters,—
The sweet soil lies below,—
Whether with smiles or tears it little matters,
So it may spring and grow.

I know my hand may never reap its sowing;
And yet some other may.
And I may never even see it growing—
So short is my little day!

Still must I sow. Though I may go forth weeping,
I cannot, dare not stay.
God grant a harvest! though I may be sleeping
Under the shadows gray.

I know not but the ruthless frosts may wither,
The worms may eat my rose;
There may not be one flower or sheaf to gather.
Blindly I wait—God knows.

A Storm on the Frontier.

Hark to the storm. It is a fearful night;—
A night of piercing cold and whirling snow,
And drifts that loom like ghosts in sheeted white,
Heaped by the tempest in its mad delight,
But, fiercely as the ice winds may blow,
Sweep as they may across these open lands,—
Low is our cabin and so safely stands.

Come, leave your work, and sit beside the fire,
The storm may roar and beat the frosted pane,
And at the bolted door may tug and strain;
Safe is our shelter though the strife be dire,
And warm as if but dropped the summer rain,
The lamp burns brightly, and this quiet room
Seems like a heaven—if such a thing could be—
Besieged by tempests, wrapped in midnight gloom,
Encompassed by a wild and heaving sea,
While round us howl the demons of the night,
How passing sweet this calm, and warmth, and light.

What ails you, Love? Why is your cheek so white?
How start and shiver—what is it you feel?
Sure we are safe, and naught can harm us here.
You have a groan? Why, that but goes to show
What tricks a woman's pity loves to play
Upon her fears. Be calm, I pray.
'Twas but a wilder gust, and you should know,
No living thing would venture out to-night.

* * * * *

A winter morn. The fierce, wild night is gone;
The mad winds, overspent, have sunk to rest;
Their work remains. The prairie's frozen breast
Lies heaped with hills beneath the splendid dawn.
Come out and look, it is a goodly sight—
These spotless ranges sparkling in the sun;
The still, white world created into night.

The paths are blocked. A pity 'tis to soil
These spotless drifts; yet, what the night wind rears
Must man destroy at morn. The spade must
Spoil our Alpine scenery—but, oh! what's here?
A something harder than the wind-packed snow
Resists the blade. 'Tis mine to shudder now,
And shrink and shiver with a sickening fear.
A still white face the fresh piled drift below,
A frozen form wrapped in a shroud of white
Flung round it by the black hands of night.
The dead, white face, the form, too well I know,
Had I but heeded what you said last night!
You heard a cry through all the gusty roar;
I laughed and said 'twas but the wind, and so
Here lies my neighbor, frozen at my door.

To the Memory of a Young Friend.

Sing a song with sorrow laden,
Sing a requiem sad and slow,
For the pure and gentle maiden
Lying with her head so low.
Loving was she, sweet and mild,
Half a woman, half a child.

Hands so helpful, past the telling.
Ah, how soon your work is done!
Feet so light, so fleet, so willing,
Ah, how soon your race is run!

Bright her morning rose, and yet
Ere its prime her sun is set.

In the great world's swelling surges—
Ceaseless strife of loss and gain—
Drowned are sorrow's mournful dirges,
Sobs of anguish, cries of pain.
Why for her such tears should flow,
Only we who loved her know.

Keen the wind that sweeps the prairie;
Keener yet the bitter breath
Blown from off the borders dreary
Of the silent realm of Death.
And we shiver—shrink with dread,
As we cover up our dead.

Hard is parting—hard to sever
Ties that bleed at every strand;
And the gap shall close, ah, never,
In that broken household band.
Yet, while we perforce must weep,
Sleep, O maiden! sweetly sleep.

O'er the snows, descending lightly,
Softly fold their ermine screen;
Choicest flowers shall blossom brightly;
Grasses wave their banners green,
Summer breezes, stealing nigh,
These shall breathe thy lullaby.

Tender is our common mother,
Shielding from the storm and strife,
While Hope whispers of another,
And a brighter, better life.
Even amid our blinding tears,
Faith serene consoles and cheers.

The Old Soldier.

(A Birthday Tribute Inscribed to General M. Brayman.)

The stress of the day is over,
And calm is the evening time;
Behind are the heights that manhood
Has scaled in its pride and prime.

At noon was the smoke of battle
Its tumult, its crash and roar;
But the boom and the musket's rattle
The veteran hears no more.

In the peace of the quiet evening,
The warfare over and done
Is the old soldier dreaming
Of victories nobly won.

Dreams he of fierce, wild charge,
The screaming of shot and shell,
The roll of drums and the shouting?
It may be—but who can tell?

Feels he the cold come creeping
With the sun so low in the west?
Nay! though his locks are frosted
The heart is warm in his breast.

Soft is the glow of the sunset,
And it touches him tenderly;
Bright was the day that is setting,
And long may the twilight be.

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At the Falls.

In this deep solitude, amid the roar
Of falling waters, and soft folds of spray,
I sit upon the green and sedgy shore—
Sit silent, while the river rolls away.

What heed I here the hollow masquerade
That men call life? It surely heeds not me;
I am not missed from the gay cavalcade
None whisper, "This was her place, where is she?"

Little I reck! The page upon my knee
Talks honestly, and yon white waterfall
Pours a deep voice of truth unceasingly,
While the gay world is but a masquer's ball.

Seeing the Editors.

I went to see the Editors, in great Milwaukee town,
And some were old, with hoary hair, some young, with locks
of brown,
But, old or young, or tall or short, when all was said and
done,
They seemed a goodly set of men as e'er the sun shone on.

They had come from north and south, they had come from
east and west,
Down from the northern pine lands, up from the prairie's
breast,
Men of the Leading Journals, men of the Local Sheet,
Came flocking in together, and I watched them meet and
greet.

At this I greatly wondered: I saw each meet the other,
With a smile and a clasping hand, as if he were his brother.
Fair words and kindly cheer were the order of the day;
The pipe of peace went round, and the sword was laid away.

"Are these friends or enemies?" I questioned silently;
I recalled the odious names they have called each other by,—
"Idiot," "knave," and "sorehead"—all these, and many
more,
They have used to pelt each other—is their rancor spent
and o'er?

They talked of their position, of the duty of the press;
How opponents should be treated—with honest friendli-
ness.

A fair and lovely theory! the practice seems to be
To call each man a rascal, who don't agree with me.

What do they mean, I wonder, by the "freedom of the
press?"

Is it this,—that each man is free to vent his "cussedness?"
Free to ban and blacken whoever may chance to be
On the other side of the fence?—O glorious liberty!

But here they were—these warriors who have oft each other
flayed,—

Talking in tones fraternal as they drank their lemonade;
And I wondered if the time, so long foretold, had come,—
The day of peace and brotherhood—the great Millennium.

I have read the papers since, and I see my hope was vain;
For the hatchet that was buried, they have dug it up
again;

The sword has left its scabbard, the spiked guns roar away,
And he who was a "sorehead," is a "sorehead" to-day.

Each man is at his desk; he has grasped the wires again,
And is pulling for his party, with all his might and main
Opponents thresh each other, who shook hands the other
day:

And I question,—do they mean *one-half* of what they say?

Taught by a Bird.

An April day: the cold wind blew,
The dark clouds lowered, the thick snow flew,
And where the springing grasses lay green,
Ragged patches of white were seen.

Snow everywhere! I gazed with a sigh,
As the big flakes fell from the gloomy sky;
Loading the limbs of the budding trees,
Filling the hollows about their knees.

Had winter come back—the vanquished king—
And rudely throttled the maiden spring?
But lo! from amid the storm I heard
The sweet, glad song of a tiny bird.

On a tufted twig, its feet in the snow,
Swung by the cold wind to and fro,
It sat and sang—that wee brown bird—
Putting to shame my petulant word.

The darkness lifted, the storm was done:
Through the broken cloud-rifts shone the sun;
A breath came up from the south, and the snow
Melted away in genial glow.

Spring reigned again: and again I heard
The joyous song of that dear brown bird.
With quickened pulses, and heart aglow,
I caught the refrain, "I told you so."

Ah, little bird, had I faith like you,
When life and the world are dark to view!
When lowering skies are above me bent,
Could I feel your trust and your sweet content!

You sang, your tender feet in the snow,
Swung by the cold wind to and fro.
Your faith was sure, and now I repeat
Over and over the lesson so sweet.

Tar-and-Feather Reform.

Pour the tar on, pour it thick;
Bring the feathers, make them stick
On her temples smooth and fair,
In the meshes of her hair;
There, now, shameless courtesen,
Charm your lovers if you can.

But the lovers—where are they?
Silently they slink away.
Boys must sow wild oats, you know;
Scold them well and let them go.
Boys are boys; to err is human—
Tar and feathers for the woman.

Woman? She is but a child.
Well, no matter; drive her wild.
Young and fair? So much the worse.
Brand her deeper, let the curse
On her young head weighing down,
Crush her, force her on the town.

She is fallen, that's enough,
Give her, henceforth, kick and cuff.
While we work and pray and weep
For the heathen o'er the deep,
We are saints of purity—
We are Christians—don't you see?

When we women have our way,
When it comes—that glorious day—
When we sit in honor great,
Piloting the ship of state,
All shall then, as well as we,
Practice this our theory:
Never right a sinking boat,
When a woman is afloat:
If her record holds a flaw,
Do not throw her e'en a straw;
Kick her roughly, push her down;
Hold her under, let her drown!

Died of Want.

Tread lightly on the creaking floors;
Speak softly—so:
With careful fingers ope and shut the doors;
Calk up that crack through which the night rain pours:
These rafters low
Bend o'er a traveler to unseen shores,
Where all must go.
A scanty bed, a drear, unfurnished room;
Dire noxious air,
Where pent-up Fever breathes its hot simoon,
And poverty has piled its brush and broom,
Till all is bare;
A pale, pinched face amid the midnight gloom,
And damp, white hair,
'Tis the last chapter of a story old
One period more,
To finish all, and the sad tale is told.
Too late comes Charity, with generous gold
And pity sore;
Too long since Famine and Disease and Cold
Entered the door.

A glimmer of gray dawn through sleet and rain,
That beat and beat
With icy hands upon the dingy pane.
Within, a solemn hush. Fold smooth and plain
The winding sheet.
But see! the poor lips wear a smile again,
Serene and sweet.

Softly, good driver! scour not quite so fast
The stony pave.
You know not how your final lot is cast;
Some dire disaster, some unlooked-for blast
Or whelming wave,
May land you, like this poor old man, at last,
In pauper's grave.

Replace the sod. He sleeps on pillow low,
Like other dead.
His deep and pulseless rest no dreams shall know—
No shivering pangs, though freezing winds shall blow
Across his bed.
But, softly fall, O rain, and winter snow,
Above his head.

My Mother's Wheel.

Broken, dismantled! would that it were mine:
I would not keep it in that dusty nook,
Where tangled cobwebs cross and intertwine,
And old, grim spiders from their corners look.

From distaff, band, and polished rim, are hung
The dusty meshes. Black the spindle is,
Crooked, and rusty—a dead, silent tongue,
That once made whirling music—there it lies.

Ah, dear to me is the forsaken thing!
I gaze upon it and my eyes grow dim:
For I can see my mother, hear her sing,
As winds the shining thread, and whirls the rim.

So sweet she sang—her youngest on her knee—
Now a low warble, now some grand old hymn.
Sublime, exultant, full of victory,
Triumphant as the songs of seraphim.

Sweet toiler! through her life of crowded care,
While grief came oft, and pain, and weariness,
Still swelled the anthem, still was breathed the prayer,
Till death came clasping with its cold caress.

She sings no more; beside the chimney wide
No more she spins. Years come and go:
Above her grave on the lone hillside,
The snow drifts lie, the summer grasses grow.

Dick and I.

I had a lover once—'twas long ago
I must have been some eight or nine, or so,
And he perhaps was ten. He had blue eyes,
And hair like cotton-weed, that floats and flies,
Or—better, like like a hand of bleachen flax.
He was not handsome—but, I'm telling "fax."
And must be accurate. A "poets lie"
May always be aesthetic—reason why—
The poet paints from out his own invention;
While I—I've only facts to mention.

I loved him, if all else were homely prose,
There's poetry in that. A bright red rose
Creeps through a cranny in a naked wall,
And blossoms there:—it is a rose for all.

My rose bloomed early and its growth was quick —
Much like a mushroom's. Ah, white-headed Dick!
If this should meet your eye, you will remember
One rainy day—'twas in the gray November.

A monstrous kettle hanging from the crane,
With steam clouds rolling up to meet the rain;
A great old fireplace, with open maw:
Two children sucking cider through a straw:
Such was the tableau: as the night closed in,
The firelight with the darkness fought to win,
Pushing the shadows back against the walls.
Where bacon hung, dried apples, coats and shawls.

The night grew darker. Still the autumn rain
Beat with its wet on the window pane:
But we two liked it well. We put together
Our two small heads, and sagely on the weather
Exchanged congratulations. No moonlight.
The steady rain—sure, Dick must stay all night.

We had it settled, and we went to play.
"Blindfold," "I spy," and even "Pull away,"
Came on in turn. The evening was near spent,
And nought had troubled our complete content,
But perfect happiness—we grasp it, fold it,
Thinking it ours, alas! we never hold it
For any length of time. It slips and quivers.
And something hits and knocks it into shivers.
And this is what hit ours—this the shock
That fell upon our peace at nine o'clock.
Fate lifted up its hand so hard and grim,
And struck this blow: *Dick's mother sent for him!*

He cried, and so did I. Ah well,
It is a simple story that I tell,
And you may laugh, perchance—yet it is real,
And serves to show the griefs that children feel,

Which grown folks do not count on. I have seen
Since then some sorrow, some pangs sharp and keen;
Have even dreamed I stood at Heaven's door,
And saw it shut on me forever more.
Yet that one night, so gloomy and so wet,
With rain and tears, I've not forgotten yet.

My Hickory Tree.

Towering close at my cottage door,
Tall and royal, and grand to see,
With broad arms reaching the greensward o'er—
O, a mighty King is my hickory tree!

Changing its guise with the changing scene,
As the wheels of the year are onward rolled;
Clad all the summer in deepest green,
Now resplendent in robes of gold.

Here gather the earliest birds of spring,
When the earth awakes from its frozen rest—
The tiny bluebird with sapphire wing,
The robin sweet with its glowing breast.

When vines are green at the window frame,
The brown thrush sings and the dove coos low,
And the oriole comes like a flash of flame,
And hangs its nest from the outmost bow.

On the velvet grass, in the grateful shade,
The workmen lie as they rest at noon,
Cheered by the bird songs overhead,
Lulled by the honey bee's drowsy tune.

And here, with friends, on summer eves,
We sit in the sunset's mellow glow—
Sit till the night winds toss the leaves,
And moonbeams sift to the sward below.

O happy scenes! But now no more
We seek the shade; the wind blows cold;
The frost comes creeping about the door;
The dead flowers rot on the sodden mold.

Splendid yet is my hickory tree,
As the gorgeous leaves come fluttering down
Like flakes of gold; but soon I shall see
Only sightless heaps, all sere and brown.

Shook by the winds that go hurrying by,
Down to the turf the ripe nuts fall;
And the boughs shall soon stretch toward the sky,
Stripped of their nuts and leaves and all.

When deep drifts lie on the frozen farms,
The naked giant, in scornful glee,
Shall toss in the storm his strong, bare arms—
O, a mighty King is my hickory tree !

Our Friendship.

They say true friendship changeth not,
But grows and grows:
Through chance, and time, and treacherous plot.
Through change of scene and change of lot,
Still changeless shows.

If this be true, sure here is seen
Some great mistake!
The friend of years no friend hath been,
Else naught on earth could come between.
The bond to break.

Am I, then, false? I meant no lie;
Yet nevermore
With friendship on my lip, can I,
As oft aforetime, seek thine eye,
Or cross thy door!

Dost marvel why? 'Tis quickly told.
Here at thy feet
I fling away our friendship old,
Because henceforth our two hearts hold
A tie more sweet!

I love thee! therefore can we be
No longer friends.
Thou takest what I offer thee—
Thy whole heart's sweetness givest me.
So friendship ends.

Over Niagara.

Harken, friends, while I tell you—
I will be as brief as I may—
How, while the drums were beating,
And the great guns boomed away,
A pair of blithe young lovers
Kept Independence Day.

I was passing the bridge up yonder,
That crosses the creek, you know,
Near where it enters the river,
That flows with a mighty flow
Toward where the cataract thunders,
Only three miles below.

I heard sweet peals of laughter
Ring over the river wide,
And looked where a boat went tossing
Out toward the rapid tide,
And saw the prow was headed
Toward the American side.

I watched the boy that was rowing,
And the girl that sat in the stern.

And I saw that the two were lovers—
It took but a glance to learn—
They were taking their trip of pleasure—
Would they ever, ever return?

I saw that he rowed but badly,
And my heart sank at the sight;
It is only the skillful oarsman,
With a touch both firm and light,
That here rows across the river
And ever returns at night.

I watched the frail craft tossing,
In a tremor of dead suspense:
And I held my breath in terror
That swept over every sense,
As I saw the boat was heading
Outside of the "river fence."

They have passed it now! In the rapids,
Where never a boat crossed o'er,
They were swinging nearer and nearer
The cataract's thundering roar.
They will never come back to the Queen's land,
Nor reach the American shore!

There are flecks of foam on the water;
There are white-caps on the tide;
And swifter, and even swifter
Down to their doom they glide.
Not thus in the joyful morning
Did the youth think to wed his bride!

I hear the girl shriek wildly,
As she points to the rocks before;
I see the boy's mad effort
To turn the boat to the shore;
Then I watch him look for something—
Great God! he had dropped an oar!

My old knees they smote together;
I could feel my cheeks grow pale,
As I heard above all the roaring,
The sound of that maiden's wail:
And I clutched as if I were drowning,
My hands to the wooden rail.

Still I gazed, in my frozen terror,
For I could not turn away;
And I saw them clinging together,
As down in the boat they lay:
And the sight my midnight pillow
Will haunt till my dying day.

I saw the boat swing over
The crests of the first descent;
It was lost to sight for a moment
Where the hollowed waters bent;
The next, on a rock, foam-covered,
It poised, then downward went.

I saw no more: but others
Standing beside the fall,
Watching the beautiful rainbow
That spans the eternal wall,
Beheld a few black fragments
Of a boat—and that was all.

Down Stream.

I see a boat drift lightly by,
The stream is wide, the current slow;
No ripples break the sunbeam's glow;
Yet well I know that, ceaselessly,
The great fall thunders down below.

I see the boatman idly lean,
With listless hand upon his oar,
Unheeding that the summer shore,
With safe, still coves and banks of green,
Recedes behind him more and more.

The sunlight gilds the golden hair
That clusters round his stately head;
A lurid flush, youth's rose instead,
Dyes rounded cheek and forehead fair,
Caught from the wine cup's ruby-red.

I watch him, and I hold my breath!
He seems like one wrapped in a dream;
While swiftly rolls the narrowed stream,
And, bending o'er yon gulf of death,
I see the baleful iris gleam.

Why floats he so, like one asleep,
While nearer sounds that awful roar?
Awake, O friend! take up thine oar,
And stem the rapid's fatal sweep,
Turn hither, hither, I implore.

I stretch my arms and loudly cry;
I call until the welkin rings,
At last he hears—the frail boat springs,
Trembles a moment doubtfully,
Then slowly, landward swings.

Saved, saved at last! Adrip with spray,
I see him stand upon the shore;
And then my senses swim; the roar
Sounds like a murmur far away:—
Would I might hear it never more!

Magic Stones.

Three oval stones, worn by the lapping waters
Of wide Lake Michigan. As smooth are they
As if some lapidary's patient fingers
Had wrought their polished disks of mottled gray.

Long have I kept them; and I well remember,
When, where I picked them up. A summer's day
Drew near its close; the sunset glory
Flooded the land and on the water lay.

But not alone the sunset's gold and crimson,
The sparkling waves, the white sails moving slow.
These stones recall. Dear friends were there beside me,
With faces radiant in the evening glow.

What happiness it was to talk and listen,
To say with confidence the things we thought!
To look straight into the eyes whose open shining
Itself was speech, frank, full, concealing naught!

The city, with its restless, fevered pulses,
Was near, yet not in hearing, not in sight,
No smoke of furnaces nor roar of traffic,
Marred the still beauty of the evening light.

Alone, we few, beside the blue-green water,
To us, for one brief hour, the world was not.
Its wild ambitions, and its throes of passion,
Its fierce and selfish struggles all forgot.

And while we stood and talked, the glory faded,
The shores grew dimmer in the failing light:
The shadows deepened and the lake grew darker,
The white sails vanished in the gathering night.

'Twas years ago, and time hath wrought its changes;
Yet have these magic stones the power to wake
A throbbing memory of friendly voices,
Heard in the twilight, by the darkening lake.

Dreams.

When the sun is shining o'er us,
And our duties lie before us,
We lay our wishes by on secret shelves:
In their napkins, wrapped securely,
We enfold them, thinking surely
They are hidden both from others and ourselves.

But when slumber sweetly holds us,
And in velvet arms enfold us,
And the moonlight through the curtain faintly streams;
Then from out their hiding places,
Clad in soft, bewitching graces,
Come our wishes to inspire and rule our dreams.

How they haunt the midnight pillow!
How the pulse swells, like a billow,
As the dreamer clasps the thing he most desires!
And his throbbing heart rejoices
As he hears enchanting voices
Singing, keeping rhythmic time to golden lyres.

Wants he riches? power? honor?
Fancy is a lavish donor,
All he craves bestowing on his longing soul.
Oh, the ripe, delicious sweetness!
Oh, the rare and rich completeness,
As he quaffs with thirsty lips the brimming bowl!

But alas! the sudden waking,
When above the hill tops breaking,

With its weary burdens bringing, comes the day!
Then the dreamer grasps the real,
Puts aside his sweet ideal,
Deftly hides his dream within its nook away.

October Days.

Push back the curtains and fling wide the door;
Shut not away the light nor the sweet air,
Let the checked sunbeams play upon the floor,
And on my head low bowed, and on my hair.

Would I could sing, in words of melody,
The hazy sweetness of this wondrous time!
Low would I pitch my voice: The song should be
A soft, low chant, set to a dreamy rhyme.

No loud, high notes for tender days like these!
No trumpet tones, no swelling words of pride,
Beneath these skies, so like dim summer seas,
Where hazy ships of clouds at anchor ride.

At peace are earth and sky, while softly fall
The brown leaves at my feet. A holy palm
Rests in a benediction over all.
O silent peace! O days of silent calm!

And passion, like the winds, lies hushed and still:
A throng of gentle thoughts, sweet, calm and pure.
Knock at my door and lightly cross the sill.
Would that their fair feet might stay, their reign endure!

But storms will come. The haze upon the hills
Will yield to blinding gusts of sleet and snow;
And, for this peace that all my being fills,
The tides of battle shall surge to and fro.

Life is a struggle; and 'tis better so.

Who treads its stormy steeps, its stony ways,
And breasts its wintry blasts, must battling go.
And yet—it hath its Indian summer days.

Becalmed.

Adrift in my little boat,
Becalmed on the cold, gray sea—
And chill mists lazily float
All over my boat and me.

The breezes lie dead asleep—
Not a breath in the idle sails!
And I wearily watch and weep,
And listen for distant gales.

Shall I still drop useless tears,
And sit here and wait and wait,
Till my head grows gray with years,
For the wind that may come too late?

To be idle is shame to the strong!
I will lay my hand to the oar;
And the craft that has waited long,
Shall wait for the wind no more!

Is Marriage a Failure?

When we were young, and Love was young,
And life was bright with morning dew,
And Hope sang sweet with silver tongue.
I did not think so then—did you?

The years went by. Up stony roads
We toiled, still hand in hand, we two,
While dear love lightened heaviest loads—
I did not think so then—did you?

Sore trouble came; and griefs and fears
 Sat at our hearth the sad days through;
 And while each dried the other's tears,
 I did not think so then—did you?

While henceforth through the shadows lead
 Dim down-hill paths before us two,
 And each of us had greatest needs,
 I do not think so now—do you?

When through the dark vale all must tread
 One passes, and on bosom true,
 Leans at last a dying head—
 I will not think so then, will you?

Laura.

A village street, a cottage-home,
 A summer night, a starry sky,
 A moon-lit porch where woodbine climb,
 A sound of late feet hurrying by.

Two lovers, underneath the vines,
 With warm hands clasped, look out on life—
 A glowing scene, all sunny lines—
 No tears, no clouds, no stormy strife.

A sweet perspective stretched afar,
 With rippling streams and vales of green,
 And love the steady guiding star;
 Could aught, aught be thrust between?

How fair they were,—cheek pressed to cheek,
 Gold locks and brown in mingled strands,—
 A fairer picture one might seek
 In vain through all Earth's sunny lands.

* * * * *

The summer waned; the nights grew chill;
With stealthy fingers Autumn came,
And clad the copse and wooded hill
In gorgeous garments, splashed with flame.

At eve, returning homeward late,
Just as the frosty twilight fell,
I found young Laura at the gate,
Counting the tolling of the bell.

'The last stroke fell. Against her heart
She passed her hand. "'Tis he!" she said;
No other sign of present smart.
Would she had moaned, or wept, or prayed!

* * * * *

A grave upon a lone hill-side,
Where Autumn leaves lay sere and dead.
Here oft, at the cold even-tide,
Came silent Laura, bride unwed.

One morn they found her, still and cold,
With white lips pressed against the stone,
While in her mantle's crease and fold,
And on her hair, the hoar-frost shone.

United. Round their lowly bed
The fierce winds howl in wild delight.
Not thus, not thus they thought to wed;
Not so they planned, that summer-night.

The Whip-po-wil.

When softly over field and town,
And over yonder wood-crowned hill,
The twilight drops its curtain down,
'Tis then we hear the whip-po-wil.

From the near shadows sounds a call,
Clear in its accents, loud and shrill,
And from the orchard's willow wall
Comes the faint answer, " Whip-po-wil."

The night creeps on; the summer morn
Whitens the roof and lights the sill;
And still the bird repeats his tune,
His one refrain of " Whip-po-wil."

We hear him not at morn or noon:
Where hides he then so dumb and still?
Where lurks he, waiting for the moon?
Who ever *saw* a whip-po-wil?

Where plies his mate her household care?
In what veiled nook, secure from ill,
Builds she the tiny cradle, where
Nestles the baby whip-po-wil?

I cannot tell, yet prize the more
The unseen bird, whose wild notes thrill
The evening gloom about my door,—
Still sweetly calling, " Whip-po-wil."

Asleep through all the strong daylight,
While other birds so gayly trill;
Waking to cheer the lonely night,—
We love thee well, O whip-po-wil!

Deep Waters.

Laughing and shouting its rocks among,
The brook threads the upland lea:
But, for all its song so loudly sung,
And the small uproar of its babbling tongue,
'Tis a shallow thing in its glee.

Solemn and still doth the river go,
As it winds through its vale of rest:
Calm is its mien and its tide is slow,
Smooth is its face and its voice is low—
Yet fleets may ride on its breast.

Oh! the river is great in its silent might,
As it rolleth eternally:
But, with all its calm, so still, so bright,
In a passionate longing day and night,
It stretches its hands to the sea.

The brook and the river are each alike;
And the one all men may know;
For its fretful current with noises rife,
And its grief and joy, and its petty strife,
Are seen in its shallow flow.

The other so peaceful seems,
So still; and we fancy a soul at rest:
But, little we know what strength of will,
What mighty pulses that throb and thrill,
Are hid in the silent breast.

A clear, cool eye, with a changeless glow,
The clasp of a steady palm,
May cover the tide that sweeps below,
In a strong and resistless undertow,
Yet we say, "how cool and calm!"



Here on this rugged bluff I stand alone,
And look out on the waters.

The Sod House on the Prairie.

A low sod house, a broad green prairie,
And stately ranks of bannered corn:—
'Twas there I took my dark-eyed Mary,
And there our darling boy was born.

The walls were low, the place was homely,
But Mary sang from morn till night.
The place beneath her touch grew comely;
Her cheerful presence made it bright.

Oh, life was sweet beyond all measure!
No hour was dull, no day was long;
Each task was easy, toil was pleasure,
For love and hope were fresh and strong.

How oft we sat at eve, foretelling
The glories of that wide, new land!
And gayly planned our future dwelling—
For low sod house, a mansion grand.

Alas! we little know how fleeting
The joy that falls to human lot.
While unseen hands were dirges beating,
We smiled secure and heard them not.

One day Death came and took my Mary;
Another, and the baby died.
And near the sod house on the prairie
I laid my darlings, side by side.

I could not stay. My heart was weary,
And life a load too hard to bear.
That low sod house was dreary, dreary,
For love and hope lay buried there.

Will He Come To-Night?

Will he come to-night? There is rain in the sky;
Yonder great clouds like mountains lie;
And a leaden fold hangs over the town,
Coming slowly up where the sun went down.

About its edges the lightnings play
In sheeted flashes, and far away
The thunder utters its sullen roar
In a tone of menace—I'll shut the door.

The swell of the wind in the forest trees
Sounds like the surging of distant seas.
The lightning, the thunder, the surging roar,
And the dark'ning sky—I'll watch no more.

He will not come, for the way is long;
Yet the kettle is singing its cheery song,
And the firelight dances, red and bright—
And the meal is spread—but what a night!

Were you here, Love, we should like the storm—
We two, by the firelight, bright and warm—
But I'm lonesome, sad. The flash and roar
Startle me, frighten me, more and more.

What a terrible wind. It has burst the door.
Full into the room the waters pour.
I can only shut it with might and main—
So strong is the push of the gusty rain.

The thunder is distant, now, but the rain
Beats steadily yet on the window pane.
It falls from the eaves on the cold door-stone
With its drip, and drip—what a lonesome tone.



Watching the butterflies, chasing the bees,
Wading in clover up to her knees.

It is over at last. I will go to bed;
But there is *something missing* beneath my head.
What loving simpletons girls must be
To go and get married, and be—like me.

The First Breath of Spring.

The drifts lie deep, the ice bound stream
Wrestles in vain with its wedded chain:
The lake still sleeps, still dreams its dream,
Under its bright, cold counterpane.

The woods are mute, save the mournful tune
Sung by the wind in last year's leaves.
Still that cracked and dolorous tune
Sobs and shudders and frets and grieves.

Winter is king:—yet, soft and sweet,
Comes a whisper, a fair, faint tone
Of distant music in muffled beat,
Only a breath, yet it shakes his throne!

Only a breath! and so faint and low,
That I lean to listen, and bare my head—
Lean to listen—till over the snow
Comes the sound of a velvet tread.

Who breathes so low? who comes apace,
Treading softly, with feet unseen.
With muffled form, and with covered face?
It is Spring that comes.—Long live the Queen!

Welcome! all hail to the reign so near!
Thine hour is not yet come, we know;
We shall wait through days that are gray and drear,
Through howling tempest and driving snow.

But we well can wait: the fields, the lake,
Silent lie, like a realm of death;
Yet thou art near and the dead shall wake,
We have heard thy voice, we have felt thy breath!

Haste! oh haste! In this hour of calm
We have heard thee, but oh to feel thy kiss!
Oh for the touch of thy lips of balm!
And oh! to be drunk with thy draughts

The Wayside Trough,

On the velvet hem of grasses green
That borders the edge of the dusty way,
Under a maple's glossy screen,
Is a rough hewn trough, all battered and gray.

All through the summer, wet or dry,
With dripping crystal the brim o'erflows.
Pure as the rain that falls from the sky,
Free as the air that comes and goes.

Into the trough falls a tiny stream—
Steadily falls, both day and night—
In the noontide's glow, in the moon's pale beam.
Sparkling always—a thread of light.

This battered trough and this tiny stream
Are known for many and many a mile.
'Tis here that the wagoner rests his team;
For this he waits—it is worth his while.

'Tis here that the footman, faint and sore,
Lured by the streamlet's silver tone,
Rests till the midday heats are o'er,
Then cheered, refreshed, presses bravely on.

And children, loitering home from school,
With hot, flushed faces, and bare, brown feet,
Dip their brows in the waters cool.
With ringing shouts and with laughter sweet.

Whence does it come—this stream so bright,
That falls in the trough by the dusty way—
This sparkling, musical thread of light,
That tinkles and sings, by night and day?

Back in the fields, at a meadow's edge,
Under a bank, by trees o'erhung,
'Mid sweet-flag clumps and grassy sedge,
Is born the stream with the silver tongue.

A deep, clear spring, with a household name—
Through fiercest drouth it still o'erflows,
As pure and as cold as if it came
From rifted bosoms of melting snow.

'Twas a dear old man (bless his memory!
It should live forever, fresh and sweet!)
Who hewed the trough from a linden tree,
And set it down by the dusty street.

He caught and harnessed the tiny stream:
It filled the trough and fills it yet.
In the old man's heart was a simple dream
Of blessing his kind—but men forget.

He sleeps on the hillside, peacefully.
Whether zephyrs sigh or storm winds blow—
The hands that hollowed the linden tree
Were mutely folded, oh! long ago!

Still weary wayfarers stoop to drink,
Where tinkles the stream like a silver bell.
Of the old, kind man few ever think:
But I know he would say—"It is just as well."

The Talking Fiend.

Sad is his fate, we may well suppose,
To whose pillow at dead of night,
Comes a ghost in diaphanous clothes,
And stands there, still and white.

It wouldn't be pleasant for you or me—
The ghost that in silence stalks;—
But worse than a silent ghost can be,
Is the fiend who always talks.

As to spiteful spirits, black or gray,
If you keep your conscience clear,
And a horseshoe over the door, they say.
Not one will venture near.

But there's nothing yet, as I've heard tell,
That can lay this thing of evil.
Not saintly purity, charm, or spell.
Can banish the talking devil.

There are bolts and bars for midnight crime,
Which in darkness prowls about;
But the thief who filches your precious time.
There's nothing to keep him out.

Of all life's miseries dread and dire,
Have sorrowful poets sung;
But worse than famine, or flood, or fire.
Is the fiend with the ceaseless tongue.

You know him; he calls himself your friend;
But your deadliest enemy,
Who presses hate to the bitter end,
Is more of a friend than he.

Does he dwell with you? At your table sit?
Then pack up your traps and fly!
Or be talked to death—and I've heard that "it
Is a terrible death to die."

Should the fiend read this, he'll not look grim.
But a smile shall his visage mellow.
He'll never dream it is meant for him,
But he'll think of some other fellow.

Woman's Work.

Let her not lift a feeble voice and cry,
"What is my work?" and fret at bars and bands,
While all about her life's plain duties lie,
Waiting undone beneath her idle hands.
The noblest life oft hath, for warp and woof,
Small, steady-running threads of daily care;
Where patient love, beneath some lowly roof,
Its poem sweet is weaving unaware,
And soft and rich and rare the web shall be.
O wife, and mother, tender brave and true,
Rejoice, be glad! and bend a thankful knee
To God, who giveth thee thy work to do.

Grandmother.

Busy and quiet, and sweet and wise,
With a long life's thought in her gentle eyes—
The hoarding of many a year—
Nearer drawing, from sun to sun,
To the peaceful goal of a race well run,
Waiting her record of work well done
In the hearts that hold her dear.

Grandmother's locks, all silvery white,
Seem to my fancy like bands of light,
 Crowning her sweet pale face.
Grandmother's voice is tender and low;
And the fall of her footsteps soft and slow,
As hither and yonder, and to and fro,
 She glides with a saintly grace.

Grandmother's mission, for every day,
Is to do the duty that comes her way,
 Whatever that duty may be.
To think of others, her self forgot,
To dry sad tears when her own are wet,
Is Grandmother's plan—and the best one yet,—
 'Twere a good one for you and me.

She has her griefs, though she hides them well,
Her heart still throbs when a tolling bell
 Utters its mournful tone.
For she thinks of a knell rung long ago,
Of a far off grave underneath the snow,
And a silent sleeper on pillow low,
 Whose lips once pressed her own.

Thirty years—'tis a lonely while!
Yet Grandmother's face wears a peaceful smile
 As she sits in the sunset glow.
She is busy still, as evening light
Falls on her hair, so silvery white:
And she softly speaks of the coming night—
 She is biding her time to go.

Indian Summer.

Again the leaves come fluttering down,
 Slowly, silently, one by one,—
Scarlet, and crimson, and gold, and brown,—
 Willing to fall, for their work is done,

And once again comes the dreamy haze,
 Draping the hills with its filmy blue,
And veiling the sun, whose tender rays,
 With mellowed light come shimmering through.

Softly it rests on the sleeping lake—
 This filmy veil—and the distant shore,
Fringed with tangles of brush and brake,
 Shows a dim blue line and nothing more.

The winds are asleep, save now and then
 Some wandering breeze comes stealing by,
Softly rises, then sinks again,
 And dies away like an infant's sigh.

You feel the spell of those dreamy days
 I know—for your soul is in tune with mine.
You love the stillness, the tender haze;
 I know—for your thoughts with my own entwine.

But this dreamy calm, this solemn hush,
 The sleeping winds, and the mellow glow,
Only foretell the tempest's rush,
 The icy blast, and whirling snow.

We— you and I—must bow to the frost,
 When our locks are white with hoary kiss:
Our last rose scattered, its petals lost,
 May our indian summer be calm—like this.

Love.

Some men there are, called holy, who retire
To dreary deserts from the world away,
Who scourge the flesh, and meditate and pray.
And for each earthly thought do penance dire
Until all human sympathies expire:
Who sacrifice God's precious gifts and say
That from the bitter ashes, dead and gray,
Shall spring the glowing flames of sacred fire.
But cold the ashes are, no flames arise.
When hearts are dead no fervent pulse can beat.
No warm blood flow. Oh, fools are they, and blind,
Who, scorning earth, think thus to scale the skies!
Such scorn (would they could know!) but weights the feet.
He loves God best who best doth love his kind.

High and Low.

Down in the valley, a peaceful scene—
Streamlets winding through meadows green,
Rippling, smiling, their banks between.

Up on the heights, the torrents flash,
Rush and tumble, and roar and dash,
Seaming the soil with many a gash.

Down in the valley, the summer rain
Gently falls on the growing grain.
Softly taps at the window-pane.

Up on the heights, the tempests beat.
Hurling volleys of pelting sleet,
When winds and clouds like armies meet.

Down in the valley, through growing corn,
The warm wind steals, and the breeze of morn.
Kisses the buds, and the flowers are born.

Up on the heights, the wind blows chill,
Smiting the heart with its icy thrill,
Shrieking at midnight, sharp and shrill.

Down in the valley, a level street,
Shaded by trees whose branches meet,
Trodden lightly by tripping feet.

Up to the heights, the way is steep,
The stones are sharp, the chasms deep
And oft the pilgrims pause to weep.

Down in the valley, a vine-wreathed cot,
A happy household where strife is not,
Each content in a simple lot.

Up on the heights, one dwells apart,
A mark for many an envious dart,
Lofty, but lonely, and starved in heart.

Oh, would there were less of strife to gain,
With bleeding feet, with tug and strain,
Far, rocky heights, that are heights of pain.

The brightest wreaths of fame may rest
On throbbing brows, and royal vest
Oft has covered an aching breast.

A Wayside Tree.

I passed to-day through a forest
In somberest sombre drest;
Furled were the blood-red banners,
Quenched was each flaming crest.

The wind swept through the branches;
The clouds hung low and gray,
Bearing storms in their bosoms,
Stealing the sun away.

The roar far back in the forest,
The crackling above my head,
As the crisp leaves shook and quivered,
Filled me with nameless dread.

Like the leaves, I shook and shivered
As the cold wind colder blew,
And the tread of advancing tempests
Sounded the deep woods through.

Was there nothing left of the summer?
Naught of the autumn show?
Nothing bright for the winter
To fold in its sheets of snow?

Behold! by the dreary roadside,
Towering fair and green
In the midst of its sombre sisters,
A single oak is seen.

Touched with spatters of crimson,
Bordered with fiery bands,
Across its resplendent garments
The sun and the frost clasp hands.

I look at the tree in wonder!
It seems like some ancient sage,
Wearing his youthful freshness
Along with the frosts of age.

Oh! the life must be pure and noble
That can keep, as the seasons go,
Its June and its rich October
Till falleth the winter snow!

A Song of Peace.

Sing me a song to-night,
Not sad, nor yet keyed to mirth;
But a household lay, in a soothing voice,
As the cricket sings on the hearth.

No loud high-soaring strains,
When body and brain are spent;
But I long to listen, with half-shut lids,
To a song of sweet content.

Let the notes drop from your lips
Like summer rain from the eaves,
Or the dreamy tinkle of far-off bells
That comes through whispering leaves.

Let me hold your hand a while—
Your hand so firm and fine;
Its soft, warm clasp is a touch of peace,
And its pulses shall quiet mine.

Sing on, so soft and low;
Dispelled by the soothing strain,
Gone the heat from my throbbing brow,
And the ache from heart and brain.

Sing on: your breath at my cheek,
Your hands still clasping mine:
Your voice and your touch, my household bird,
Are sweeter and better than mine.

A Kansas Prairie and Its People.

How grandly vast the prairie seems,
Beneath the pale winter's glow—
A wide, white world, in death-like sleep,
Under its shroud of snow.

Yet there are signs of life: the lanes
Are trod by heavy teams;
A horseman, on the yon distant swell,
A moving atom seems.

The wide, white lands that stretch away
Are dotted everywhere
With orchard clumps, and farmers' homes
Are snugly nestled there.

The people of this great new world
Have come from every quarter:
Some faced each other long ago,
On red fields bathed in slaughter.

In frosty dawns of winter morns,
The white smoke curls away
From homes of men who wore the blue,
And men who wore the gray.

Here, brothers all: they hang their gifts
On the same Christmas tree;
Our kindly neighbors, cordial friends,
Are as brothers ought to be.

And crowds of children, Kansas born,—
Our young state's hope and pride,—
With rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes,
Learn lessons side by side.

Naught reck they of the battle field,
Of sad, dark years of slaughter;
The Northmen's son some day shall wear
The Southron's gentle daughter.

Acceptance.

That man is wisest who accepteth his lot
Yet mends it where he can—glad if there grows
Some lowly flower beside his lonely cot,
E'en while he plants and tends his Alpine rose.

Some good comes to us all. No poverty
But has some precious gift laid at its door.
We scorn it, call it small, what fools are we,
To spurn the less because it is not more!

There are some thirsty souls, all sick and faint
With longing for the cup that is denied.
Would they but stoop and drink, without complaint,
From the near stream, and so be satisfied.

There are some hungry hearts that well nigh break
With the dull soreness of mere emptiness.
To fill the void and sooth the weary ache
Let them but strive some other hearts to bless.

There are some idle hands that reach afar
For wilder mission, some great work of fame,
Would they but grapple life's daily war,
Reward awaits them, nobler than a name.

Oh, thirsty souls! Oh, hungry hearts and hands,
Weary with idleness! Take what you may
Of proffered good: accept life as it stands,
And make the most of its swift, fleeting day.

A Lesson for the New Year.

The last night of the year. I sat alone
Beside the dying fire. The whole house slept.
Naught stirred the silence, save the wind's low moan,
As sadly through the naked streets it crept,
The fall of embers and the clock's low beat,
That mark the passing years with tiring feet.

I am weary; and the coming year
Seemed but an added load that pressed me sore.
The morrow would bring friends, and I should hear
The tread of many feet upon the floor.
I longed for quiet: I was vexed with care;
Just then my burden seemed too great to bear.

I thought of my unopened book, my pen,
Lying long idle, rusting in its place.
Could I but take them to some lonely glen
Where toil were not, nor any human face!
"Twere joy," cried I, so fretful was my mood
"To dwell one year in utter solitude."

"Have then thy wish!" Was uttered sad and low;
I turned, and one stood by me, fair and tall,
And from his countenance with light aglow,
A look of pitying grief on me did fall.
"Have then thy wish!" He stooped and touched mine eyes
And I stood dumb, overwhelmed with strange surprise.

The silent room had vanished and the wood.
Peopled with birds, that filled its aisles with song

Compassed me round with sweet green solitude;
A clear stream trailed its silvery thread along;
And close beside it stood a rustic cot,
Piled high with volumes, and here toil was not.

Fruits for my food fell lightly at my feet;
I was alone; through all that lovely place
I knew that I might wander, and not meet,
In hill or hollow, any human face.
Within my books, all wit and wisdom blent,
I had my wish: was I therewith content?

Nay, verily. A sharp grief pierced me through.
My spirit sank, oppressed with midnight gloom,
While trees hung o'er me wet with heaven's dew.
I felt as one walled up within a tomb.
I sought my books; locked were their stores from me;
The hot tears dimmed my sight, I could not see.

I tried my pen—in vain. No words would come,
Thought was an arid desert, wide and gray,
From which no streams would flow. My soul was dumb
With utter loneliness; but could I pray?
I cast me on the fragrant, dewy sod,
My face pressed in the grass—and cried to God,

"Oh! Give me back," I prayed, "The dear days gone—
The toilsome days, so full of crowded care—
The hands I clasped, the lips that pressed my own
For these, for these, could I all burdens bear?"
I started, for a rustling robe trailed near;
And "Have again thy wish?" fell on my ear.

Again I felt soft, gentle fingers press
Mine eyelids down; and lo! The dear old room,
The smiling lamplight home's blessed homeliness!
The lonely wood was gone, its grief, its gloom;
And close within my call my dear ones slept,
For very joy I bowed my head and wept.

The fire was dead, the moon shone on the snow,
The wailing wintry wind blew bitter cold,
And yet I laid me down with heart aglow,
For all life's leaden care seemed turned to gold.
I slept the sleep of peace: I rose at morn,
Strong in the glad New Year—as one new born.

Bubbles.

I saw an urchin with a pipe of clay
Held to his rosy lips; a rippling brook
Kissed his bare feet, then, singing, sped away.
His cheek was dimpled, mirth was in his look.

The child was blowing bubbles. One by one
The tiny globes of rainbow, frail and fair,
Sailed upward, glittered in the morning sun,
Trembled and swung upon the summer air.

Then one by one I saw them burst. Some fell
Upon the stream that gurgled swiftly past,
Broke, and were gone forever. Balanced well,
Some stayed a moment, but all burst at last.

I saw them vanish, and I sadly thought,
With tear-wet eyelid and with quivering lip,
That such was history—thus frailly wrought,
Men's lives are bubbles, Fortune blows the pipe.

A drop, a breath—no more—is place and power.
The crowd that cries to-day, "Long live the King!"
To-morrow spurns its creature of an hour,
And lays him low—a scorned and hated thing.

I see how men go up and men go down;
I see the high and noble sink to shame;
I see the high exile's ban succeed the crown;
I see vile Slander dog the steps of Fame.

So must it be; the brightest bubbles burst;
To grasp them is to clutch at empty air.
Is naught, then, certain? is all good accurst?
Is this life all? Proclaim it, ye who dare!

God's Truth abides. We turn and veer about;
We clasp our idols, and they fall to dust;
Our faith is weak—we plunge in seas of doubt—
Yet there is still the Rock; and God is just.

Confidence,

Is it better never to hope, than to hope in vain?
Is it better never to strive, lest we never attain?
Is it better to cling to the shore and leave untried
Life's wide, deep sea, for dread of its storm and tide?

Who ventures naught, he surely shall never win;
He naught shall finish, who never doth aught begin;
The sun may shine and the heavens may shed its rain,
But only the sower may harvest his golden grain.

To-morrow, we know, is dark with its misty veil;
The light on the path to-day is but dim and pale;
Blindly we grope our way—but 'tis better so—
What God hath hidden 'tis better we should not know.

Nobler and braver is he who stakes his all,
And takes his loss or gain as the chances may fall,
Than he who folds his hands and idly waits,
Till the shadows gather darkly about his gates.

Shall we turn our ear away from a sweet refrain,
Lest the pleasant song may turn to a dirge of pain?
Shall we close our eyes to the ray in the midnight gloom,
Lest it prove a lure that leads to the door of a tomb?

Is it better never to love, lest love mistake?
The passionate heart may quiver and ache and break—
Yet give us the warm, rich wine, though well we know
That dregs as bitter as death may lie below.

We sigh for the joys that were coming, and never came;
We sit in the dark and weep, with our hearts aflame;
We feel the crush and grind of the silent mill—
Feel the crush and grind, while our lips are still.

What, then! shall we spurn our life as a broken thing?
Shall we fling a curse in the face of Heaven's King?
Happy is he who keepeth his trust through all:
He may shrink and shiver, and falter, but shall not fall.

November Rain.

November rain! November rain!
Fitfully beating the window pane;
Creeping in pools across the street;
Clinging in slush to dainty feet;
Shrouding in black the sun at noon;
Wrapping a pall about the moon.

Out in the darkness, sobbing, sighing,
Yonder, where the dead are lying,
Over mounds with headstones gray,
And new ones made but yesterday—
Weeps the rain above the mould,
Weeps the night-rain, sad and cold.

The low wind wails—a voice of pain,
Fit to chime with the weeping rain,
Dirge-like, solemn, it sinks and swells,
Till I start and listen for tolling bells,
And let them toll— the summer fled,
Wild winds and rain bewail the dead.

And yet not dead. A prophesy
Over wintry wastes comes down to me,
Strong, exultant, floating down
Over frozen fields and forests brown,
Clear and sweet it peals and swells,
Like New Year chimes from midnight bells.

It tells of a heart with life aglow,
Throbbing under the shrouding snow,
Beating, beating with pulses warm,
While roars above it the gusty storm.
Asleep—not dead—your grief is vain,
Wild, wailing winds, November rain.

Shadows.

Gray, cold and gray
Is the desolate wintry sky.
As the colorless daylight fades away
And the starless night draws nigh,
I sit in my darkened room
By the fire,—it is burning low,
While fancy weaves in her pauseless loom.
And swift and silent, amid the gloom,
Her shuttle glides to and fro.

Sad, sombre and sad
Is the web that she weaves to-night;
And it wraps my soul as the world is clad
In the desolate evening light.
Strange is this nameless sorrow!
I weep, and I scarce know why
It is the frown of some dark to-morrow
That looms above me, and I must borrow
Grief from by and by?

Why, fancy why
Hast done so ill thy task?
Instead of a gloom like the starless sky,
Oh, give me the thing I ask,
It is just as easy to rear
A sunny castle in Spain
As to conjure up some faith or fear,
Some shadowy grief that brings a tear
From the ache of a nameless pain.

Over the Hill.

We met on the hillside—we both were young—
Where countless thousands have met before;
And read together the tender book
That youth in all time cons o'er and o'er.

How sweet the rhymes! How brightly down
Shone on our faces the golden morn!
Far up the path sweet roses clung,
Soft blew the wind of the Summer's born.

"Our path shall be one," he tenderly said.
"Up the hill, down the other side;
Whether heavy or light the burden be,
Only as one shall our strength be tried."

So we climbed together, young and strong—
For no toil is heavy to Love and Youth—
And plucked the flowers that fringed the way—
Flowers that blossom for Trust and Truth.

How sweet the morn! How the hours sped!
And dancing beside us came little feet,
Sweet, tiny voices and little hands,
Clinging softly, with clasping sweet.

Ah, the tender sadness with which one tells
Of joys that are dead! The morning gone,
Rough grew the way and hard the toil,
As the weary heat of the noon came on.

And then he was stricken! falling down
In the rugged way at the hot noontide;
And cold hands bore him away from me,
Over the stream to the other side.

O! weary, weary, the way I have trod!
The pattering feet beside my own
No more keep time, and the little hands
Clasp mine no more. Old, and alone!

I have passed the summit long ago—
Slowly, painfully, creeping down!
Gray locks are straying my temples o'er,
Where clustered brightly the curls of brown.

At the foot of the hill rolls the sullen stream;
I am nearing it now, at the eventide;
I shall enter it when the sun goes down,
And meet my love on the other side!

The First Bird.

The south wind blows with a hint of spring—
A prophecy—it can be nothing more;
But there sits a bird with wee brown wing,
Up in the hickory, over the door.

On a naked twig he sits and sings;
And the March sun shines, and the warm winds blow
And his frail perch trembles and sways and swings,
Over great masses of melting snow.

Oh! his song is sweet! and almost I think
That the spring is come: and a conjured scene
Of the planting of corn and the bobolink,
Dreamily rises my thoughts between.

But heavy and deep lies the winter drift!—
Ah, little bird, you're ahead of your time!
The wind will change with a sudden shift:
You will shiver and chill in our northern clime.

You had better have stayed in the orange trees
For some days yet—for where will you go
When the icy raindrops fall and freeze?
And where will you hid from the sleet and snow?

Little bird, would you only come to my door;
I would take you into my kitchen warm—
Where strangers a welcome have found before—
And keep you safe from the driving storm.

Will you come?—But you still believe in the spring;
You slight the offer I make, and me.
You are off! with your song and your glancing wing,
And silent and bare is my hickory tree.

Carrier's Address.

I Wish you Happy New Year, kind friends and patrons all,
On you may Heaven's blessing, like summer showers fall;
May your joys be great and lasting, your sorrows short and
small.

With the New Year at the threshold, and the Old Year
laid away
Beneath the shrouds of winter, of the winter hoar and gray,
I come to pray your patience while I sing my simple lay.

Did you hear the bells a-ringing in the middle of the night?
Did you see, athwart the darkness, a radiance clear and
bright,
As the strong hands of the New Year folded back the gates
of light?

It is come—the joyful morning; let all words be words of
cheer;
Let sorrow cease its warning and forget to drop its tear;
Let the croaker cease his croaking, for once in all the year.

There is ample cause for triumph, ample cause for hopeful
song,
For the Right has learned to conquer in its conflict with
the Wrong,
And Corruption fears and trembles, for the arm of Truth is
strong.

You have watched the tides of battle, from your firesides
bright and warm;
You have marked the people's banner, the broad banner of
Reform;
You have seen it waving proudly above the surging storm.

You have heard the victor's peans floating up from distant shores,
From the beaches of the Bay state, where the wild Atlantic roars,
And from sunny southern gardens, where the Mississippi pours.

Where Ohio rolls its waters, where sweeps the Tennessee,
From the shores of bleak Ontario, from the vales of Genesee,
You have heard the thunderous echoes of the guns of victory.

What means the glad rejoicing? What do we hope to win
When the Old is going out, and the New is coming in?
For a change that betters nothing, is a change not worth a pin.

We hope for better rulers—men who earnestly desire
The good of *all* the country, and who honestly aspire
To wash away the traces of the days of blood and fire.

The war is long since over, and it is not brave we know,
To keep relentless foot upon the neck of fallen foe;
Let us bridge the "bloody chasm," o'er the graves let grasses grow:
Across old fields of battle let the breath of kindness blow.

Send out the cleansing besom, sweep away the rot and rust
From the courts our fathers founded! Brush away the gathered dust
Where righteous laws lie buried—should not judgement
aye be just?

"Down with the Carpet Baggers," comes with the glad hurrah;
"Down with the Salary Grabbers," and "down the Press Gag Law,"
While we snatch the good old Union from destruction's rav-
ening jaw.

Ho, for the good time coming!—even now its on the way.
When the rascals shall be punished, and the patriots win
the day:
When only faithful servants shall receive the people's pay.

'Tis true our own Wisconsin fell partly away from grace,
She was seized with sudden panic, and backward turned her
face,
But she even now repenteth, and is mourning her disgrace.

She was caught by a wily lawyer, who went out to hunt for
votes,
Courting the sturdy farmer, praising his wheat and oats,
And damning the railroad system as the rottenest ship
that floats.

He filled his hair with hay seed, as he grasped the farmer's
hand,
And he sang this pious anthem, so lofty and so grand,
"I want to be a Granger, and with the noble Grangers stand."

So the Badgers were bamboozled, for the trap was deftly set,
But now their eyes are opened and they see the silken net;
And from the woods and prairies come the tones of deep
regret.

"This is the wholesom' Gospel, clean work, unspotted hands,
The public mill must take square toll, honest taxes on our
lands,
Which The News is ever preaching— the platform where it
stands.

It tells the people TRUTH, denounces Regency and Ring,
For its argus eye is watchful, it hates and scorns the thing
Which men miscall republic, where secret gold is king.

While the years swing round their circle, and the seasons
come and go
In calm, soft, summer mornings, in dawns still dim with
snow,
It lays the world before you, its doings, high and low.

And as the great world changes, keeping step with Time,
It marks the wheels of Progress, as they roll o'er every
clime,
And paints you shifting pictures, now grotesque, now sub-
lime.

Now a strain for our fair Cream City—but, you know,
with too much to say,
One often stammers, and falters, and utterance dies away;
'Twill be thus if my song goes halting, gets tangled, loses
its way.

So fair, so fresh, so stately, the Gem of the wide, wide West,
Do you see how her arms she stretches, and fold to her
throbbing breast
The circling farms and woodlands? How she widens her
place of rest?

Lapped by the pale blue waters of yonder inland Sea,
Spreading along its margin swiftly and steadily:
Who shall look down her future and tell where her bounds
shall be?

There's no end of things she does, with her busy hands and
brain;
She makes the finest flour, and the mills that grind the
grain;
Organs, books, steam engines, and verses thick as rain.

Under the sun at noonday, under the midnight stars,
With the brawny fist of a Vulcan, she forges her iron bars,
And her pavements throb and tremble under her loaded
cars.

So she eats the bread of labor, and lays it up in store,
And she always has a slice for the sick and suffering poor:
In the face of helpless Want, she has never closed her door.

We are proud of our beautiful city, proud of her spreading
fame,
Proud of her growing greatness,—and who shall chide or
blame?
It rests with us, her children, stainless to keep her name.

The seasons are swiftly flying, and the years—how they
slip away!

We are nearing a mighty landmark,—Freedom's Centenni-
al Day.
Her years are almost a hundred, and her locks are not yet
gray,
And the stain that was on her garments, thank God, it is
washed away.

She was born in the midst of danger, and a King sent forth
his slaves
To strangle her in her cradle. They came, and she dug
their graves;
But the sod was soaked and watered with the blood of her
faithful brave.

She passed through seas of sorrow, through many an evil
day,
She has worn her garb of mourning—her sackcloth drear
and gray,
Yet she bore aloft her banner, and her foes were swept
away.

On the birthday that is coming, may her children, brave
and free,
From all her distant borders, come and gather at her knee,
Clasping hands like loving brothers, in peace and harmony,
While the sword, forgot in its scabbard, is rusting silently.

"Tis well the Future's hidden—well we cannot tear away,
The dark and silent curtain 'twixt to-morrow and to-day;
He who borrows future trouble, has a weary debt to pay.

Let us drop our sins and errors in the grave of 'Seventy-four,
Let us roll a stone above them, that they resurrect no more:
Let us not return to take them, though tempted hard and sore.

This is the noblest wisdom ever clasped to mortal breast—
Wheresoever one is working, just to do his level best;
To accept the present duty, and leave to God the rest.

My lay is ended. Kindly think sometimes
Amid your pleasures, of the carrier boy,
Who on this day, in simple, cheerful rhymes,
Sang you a New Year Song, and wished you joy.

Beyond the River.

The time must come, I know, when we shall part—
All ties must sever:
This golden zone, enclasping heart to heart,
Must snap and shiver.
But doth yon deep, dark stream, part evermore?
Or shall we meet and greet on that far shore,
Beyond the river?

If we shall meet—oh! would that I knew how!
In saintly blessing?
Or shall we stand as we are standing now—
Mutely caressing?
Is yonder life but this grown rich and grand?
Or is humanity left on the strand—
Dropped in undressing?

Oh would I knew! The misty clouds that lie
Those waters over
Still darkly droop, still mock my straining eye,
Still thickly hover.
I call and question. Silence hath no tone.
In vain I ask how shall I meet my own—
As friend or lover?

Love is so precious, life so frail and fleet!
Hearts bleed and quiver;
Tears wet the prints of dear departing feet,
Gone hence forever.
Parting is bitter. If I could but know
That thou wilt be to me the same as now,
Beyond the river!

Is love eternal? Still yon sullen cloud
Answers me never.
In vain I plead; it folds its sable shroud,
Silent forever.
But I shall know. 'Tis useless to contend
With shadows; yet all doubt shall have an end
Beyond the river.

Harvest-Home.

Again the Harvest-Home. Night after night,
The full, round moon climbs up the dusky east,
Ere yet the day quite yields its throne to-night,
Ere yet the sunset's glow has wholly ceased.
Night follows night in glorious, stately march.
The same round moon, the same far, dusky stars,
In solemn splendor, from the vaulted arch
Shed their soft light in pale and misty bars.
Do you remember one sweet summer's prime—
Such nights as these, such dim and dusky glow—

When first our two lives met in blended rhyme?
We both were young—and it was long ago.

What hope was ours, as, standing hand in hand,
Amid the summer moon's soft, tender light,
We wove our plans together, strand by strand,
In fearless faith? How is it, Love, to-night?

As then, the whispering winds steal through the corn;
As then, we hear the owl's weird, solemn cry;
As then, the tawny fields, but newly shorn.
Wet with the night dews, bare and silent lie.

As then, the bark of dogs sounds faint and far;
As then, the grasses hide an insect throng;
As then, the glowworm shows its tiny star:
As then, rings sharp and clear the cricket's song.

As then, the solemn moonlight, shining down,
Blent with the twilight's last departing ray.
Then seems but now—and yet your locks were brown.
And now I see them thickly strewn with gray.

Then seems but now. I feel the same dear arm
That then I leaned upon, about me thrown:
The voice that swayed me with its subtle charm
Still keeps for me the old caressing tone.

Then seems but now—and yet your steps are slow;
Your brow shows prints of pain, and toil, and care;
And I have seen my youth's last roses blow.
I, too, am growing old—why should I care?

What matters it? In counting off our life
By harvest moons, the checkered, toilsome years
Show in their record more of peace than strife,
More joy than sorrow, more of smiles than tears.

Time flies apace. Spring flowers, and Winter-rime,
And sweet June roses, swiftly go and come;
Yet the full richness of our youthful prime
Still crowns us both anew at Harvest Home.

Morning View of Lake Michigan.

Here on this rugged bluff I stand alone
And look out on the waters. Could I tell—
Which I cannot—all that I see and feel;
Could I but give the swelling thoughts a tone
That press up to my lips—a song so sweet,
So thrilling in its tuneful harmonies,
Should send out on the air its rhythmic beat,
That heedless wights should pause amid the street,
And listen with bowed heads and tearful eyes.

My eyes are wet The beauty of the lake
At this still morning hour, draped in its veil
Of dreamy mist so soft, translucent, pale;
Its music, as the blue waves gently break,
Move me to tears. Yet am I all alone;
No sympathetic glances kindle mine,
No answering eye, where kindred feelings shine,
Another heart interprets to my own.

Ah, well! Here are the softly gleaming waves,
Here are the gold-fringed clouds, above, below,
Which from you heaven and from the waters glow;
Here is sunshine, which my forehead laves,
And there the white-winged ships go sailing by;
The cool wind blows, and lightly lifts my hair.
Can there be solitude amid a scene so fair?
Can one be lonely with such company?

Behind me lies the city, fast asleep,
Save early workmen going to their toil
With sounding tread. The long day's dusty moil
Clanks not along the streets. The convent bell,
Whose tones above the dreamers softly swell,
Unheeded, troubles not their slumber deep.
The sleeping city and pale blue lake,
The convent bell, the low waves' ceaseless break,
The morning mists—all these shall memory keep.

One Hour.

Only to rest an hour! to loose the strain
Of feverish toil—with quiet pulse to lie
And watch with folded hands the upper main,
Where ships of soft, white cloud go floating by.

Neither to work nor think! to-morrow's care
Folded and wrapped, and closely laid away;
To make no effort, just to drink the air,
Whose warm, sweet kisses round my temples play.

Some viewless sorrow may be stealing nigh:
I will not weep for grief I do not know.
I will not shrink beneath this April sky,
And shiver at the thought of April snow.

A bird sings yonder on a leafless tree;
His songs are merry—would they be so gay
Did he sit pondering on storms to be—
On sleety rain to come another day?

You tell me that the world is going wrong—
What then? I cannot stay the surging tide;
Its many waters have a flow too strong;
I cannot turn a stream so deep and wide.

Then let me rest; enough, just now, is life;
Let labor and ambition wholly cease —
All loads laid down, hushed every thought of strife;
For this one hour I crave but perfect peace.

Trailing Clouds.

The trailing clouds hang low;
Their misty folds drag slow
O'er the ground;
And the rain makes, as it falls
On the roof and on the walls,
Scarce a sound.

I sit and idly dream,
While the rain-drops drip and stream
From the eaves;
And memory's folded book
Slowly opens, and I look
Through the leaves.

I cannot see the town,
Nor the prairies, yellow-brown,
Through the mist;
But these pages, blurred with years,
I can read them through my tears,
When I list.

I see here as I look
Through the pages of the book, —
Flinching not, —
Gray shadows, glints of sun;
Lost battles, battles won;
Woman's lot.

Green paths, with sunshine sweet;
Rough steeps, to aid my feet;
Broken staves;

Love's rapture, wildly throbbing,
The grief, as wildly sobbing
 Over graves.

Must ill all good alloy?
Will sorrow, chasing joy,
 Never rest?
Ah, why the bitter-sweet?
And why the bleeding feet?
 God knows best.

Listen! A tolling bell
Sobs out its mournful knell
 Over there;
And I know that hearts are aching—
Perhaps some heart is breaking
 Over there.

At last the clouds are lifted,
And sunset gold is sifted
 To the plain.
Oh, peace for those who grieve!
May it come like light at eve
 After rain.

Why?

I tell you how I feel on this or that,
As simply as a child confesses at
His mother's knee. You tease and ask me why,
Smiling down on me with quizzing eye.

I do not answer, or I say, "because",
Which is a woman's way and always was.
I state a truth—a fact I know full well;
The cause, the "why", I don't attempt to tell.

Philosophy explains, what ere I think,
I can resolve to causes, link by link—
Not what I feel. Emotion is a king
Tyranical, who bears no questioning.

I lay mute reason by upon the shelf,
Feel so and so, and cannot help myself.
Then, when I tell you, do not put your "Why?"
Smiling down on me with your quizzing eye.

Don't You Tell.

If you have a cherished secret,
Don't you tell:—
Not your friend—for his tympanum
Is a bell,
With its echoes, wide rebounding,
Multiplied and far resounding,—
Don't you tell.

If, yourself, you cannot keep it,
Then, who can?
Could you more expect of any other man?
Yet you put him, if he tells it,
If he gives away or sells it, under ban.

Sell your gems to any buyer
In the mart;
Of your wealth, to feed the hungry,
Spare a part.
Blessings on the open pocket!
But your secret—keep it, lock it
In your heart.

Blackbirds.

Day after day the blackbirds came
And perched in flocks on my hickory tree,
While the leaves, at first just touched with flame,
Grew golden, then brown as brown could be,

And still they came in a sable shower—
A flittering, chattering, noisy crowd—
And I wondered, watching them hour by hour,
What they said when they talked so loud.

Sadly the leaves fell, one by one,
Floating, fluttering slowly down—
Leaves so green in the summer sun,
Now so withered, and sere, and brown.

The tree grew bare: I watched one day
In vain—the blackbirds came no more;
And then I knew they had fled away,
And my sorrowful thought this burden bore:

The winds shall blow through my hickory-tree,
The sifting snow, and the sleety rain:
But, little I know what awaiteth me
Ere the leaves and the blackbirds come again!

Down Below.

They say that under the ocean waves,
At the feet of the rocks where ships go down,
There are halls of silence—peaceful caves,
Where lie the sailors whom tempests drown,
Where monsters sleep, and mermaids fair
Comb forever their pale green hair.

There is surf and foam when fierce winds blow,
There is rush of billows and thunderous roar,
Still in those chambers down below,
There is calm forever and evermore.
No wind, no wave; the sunk ship's mast
Is out of the tempest's reach at last.

Life is a sea—so the poet says—
And yet the deepest of human souls
Shows smoothest surface in stormiest days.
Far underneath the wild tide rolls
Through hidden caverns in surging flow,
As the gusts of the tempest come and go.

Underneath, perchance, a careless smile,
The sorest heartache lies fathoms down;
And laughter is oft but a trick of guile
To hide the pricks of a thorny crown.
In direst conflict no sound is heard,
And the deepest grief hath never a word.

So, a great, strong soul—when truth is said—
Is a sea whose heavings are out of sight:
It buries deepest its best loved dead,
And sends out bravely its "song in the night."
There are throbs of anguish, terrible throes,
Veiled by a surface of calm repose.

Hours of Pain.

With the hot blood rushing, swelling,
Surging through my throbbing brain.
Worn and weary, past the telling,
Nerveless in the grasp of pain.

Lean on my thorny pillow,
Strewn with torments o'er and o'er;
Every pulse a bursting billow,
Breaking on a tortured shore.

But there come, in soft caressing,
Gentle touches, loving hands:
As the soft rain drops its blessing
On the scorched and thirsty lands.

Tender voices, softly falling,
Drop their pity in my ear,
Sweet as tinkling waters, calling
O'er a desert parched and sere.

Bless your music, sweet young voices—
Dear young hands, your soft caress!
Pain is fierce, but love rejoices
In its conquering tenderness.

Harvest.

Green are the cornfields, the wheat is golden;
Fresh are the footprints of radiant June;
Fair is the Earth, with all of its olden
Noontide splendor, its midnight moon.

Night comes slowly, with soft hues blended,
Purple of twilight, and cloud-wrack dun;
Sounds and sights of the day are ended,
Clatter of reaper and glare of sun.

Shocks of grain in the night show dimly,
Dotting the swells of the prairie's breast;
Down where yon headlight goes gliding grimly,
Courses the steed that knows no rest.

Whistle of engine, and jar of thunder,
Startle the silence and then are gone;
Still as before, is the valley yonder;
Softly as ever the stream flows on.

I think, as I sit here, idly dreaming—
The wind on my temples, the dew on my hair,
And the radiant moonbeams o'er me streaming—
Of another summer, as sweet and fair.

Then, as now, stood close together
Clustering sheaves on fields new shorn;
Soft, sweet winds of the summer weather
Stole through the ranks of dark green corn.

I think of a night—the moon shone brightly;
I stood bare-browed at the garden gate—
I think of a hand on my head laid lightly,
And a voice—to me 'twas the voice of fate.

* * * * *

Life's sweet summer has bloomed and faded;
Sheaves have followed the red June rose:
Flecks of the frost in my locks are braided;
Wait I now for the winter snows.

Yet, oh, yet, while life shall linger—
Let its tides swell high, or ebb and fall—
Never shall ruthless, defacing finger
Touch that picture on memory's wall.

The Trail of '49.

Across the prairie where I dwell,
Stretches away, from swell to swell,
A road that might a story tell.

The track is wide and deeply cut
By wheels of heavy wagons, but
The rank grass grows in seam and rut.

'Tis the old trail of "Forty-Nine;"—
Thus history, in graven line,

Has stamped this prairie home of mine.

The years have passed with snow and rain,
And mighty frosts upheaved—in vain—
For still this track shows clear and plain.

Tracing it where it winds away,
There comes to me at twilight gray,
A vision of another day.

I see the covered wagons go,
Across the prairie toiling slow,
Through the dreary storm, through summer glow.

I see them with their human freight—
Hearts throbbing high with hope elate—
Pass onward to a doubtful fate.

Months pass: a weary, jaded train,
Worn with fatigue, disease and pain,
Creeps slowly o'er a desert plain.

Above, a cloudless, burning sky:
Below, naught greets the weary eye,
Save wastes of sand and alkali.

No rain descends, no water flows;
No cool trees bend, no green thing grows:
Yet still that sad train onward goes.

Fatigue and thirst! No tongue can tell
The victim's anguish, fierce and fell—
His fondest dream a bubbling well.

And some go mad and wildly rave:
Some find what, at the last, they crave.
The silence of a desert grave.

The living speak in husky tones:
The poor brutes drop with piteous moans:
The track is paved with bleaching bones.

Still onward—slower and more slow—
Dogged nightly by a stealthy foe,
Toward mountain passes chocked with snow.

One sleeps, to dream of home and wife;
He wakes, at call to midnight strife
With tomahawk and scalping knife.

* * * * *

Past perils, miseries untold,
Past desert heat, past mountains cold,
What waits them in the land of gold?

Go, search a checkered history
Of soon-got hoards, as soon to flee,
Of princely wealth and poverty.

Dark tales of crime, of murders fell,
Of drunken brawl, of gambling hell—
Good chroniclers have told them well.

Go, search them all, through every line—
Yet deign to read this tale of mine,
Of the old trail of "Forty-Nine."

Hazard.

A strange and a wonderful thing is our mortal life!
Strange in its troubled joy, in its secret strife;
Strange in its helpless groping for hidden light,
With each step forward only a step in the night.

Hope is a siren that lures with a deceitful smile,
Warbles bewitching strains with her lips of guile,
Sings of to-morrow's pleasure, to-morrow's gain:
But the gain oft proves but loss, and the pleasure pain,

Caught is many a foot in a silken snare;
Ploughed is many a heart by a golden share;
Many a harvest of pain is in pleasure sown,
Watered by secret tears and in silence mown.

A curse may lurk in the palm of a soft white hand;
Many a life is wrecked on a gleaming strand.
Fair is the Danger Isle, with her emerald shore;
But the ship that treads her rocks returns no more.

Fair is the sail that floats o'er a rippling sea;
Sweet is love's thrilling strain, sung tenderly;
But dire the wreck that parts on the pitiless wave,
And the sad song that is sung at an open grave.

Bright is many a morn that soon clouds o'er;
Dark is the sullen noon, with its angry roar;
Dark is the sullen noon, and the night is black;
And our stricken treasures lie in the lightning's track.

Vainly we seek to pierce the dark Unknown;
Vainly implore of Silence an answering tone;
Vainly we ask of Fate her scroll to lend;
One thing only is sure—that death is not the end.

A Morning Call.

Come in and welcome, tiny thing,
With snowy breast and soft brown wing,
And beak of tawny hue.
But why, I pray, this wild alarm?
I will not let you come to harm:
I'm fond of such as you.

Stop, little bird! you foolish thing!
Why will you beat your tender wing
Against the cruel pane?
I do the same myself; I fret
Against the bonds about me set,
And find it all in vain.

I cannot make you understand.
Wait—I will take you in my hand,
And put you through the door.
You precious, panting little mite!
The cat would eat you at a bite
And lick his jaws for more.

He shall not have you, nor will I.
Keep you from yonder clear blue sky.
There! soar where 'er you list.

To cage a bird breaks Nature's laws;
And then I am and always was
An abolitionist.

Go, find your mate: she waits for you
Somewhere in yonder fields of blue,
Or on some swaying bough.
Tell her you got into a scrape,
But made a fortunate escape—
And please just tell her how.

You might have met a prisoner's doom,
When you came blundering to my room;
Yet I have set you free.
Then, sometimes fold your wee brown wing
Upon my hickory tree, and sing
Your sweetest songs to me.

Love, and Hate.

Although a thousand leagues two hearts divide,
That love has joined, the gulf is not so great
As that twixt two, who, dwelling side by side
Behold between, the black abyss of Hate.

Indiana.

On the death of Mrs. Indiana Demeritt, of Aztalan,
Wisconsin.

Underfoot the grass is springing,
All the earth is smiling sweet;
Overhead the birds are singing
Joyful things each other greet:
While they lay thee down to rest
With thy babe upon thy breast,
Indiana.

Softly murmurs yonder river,
Hazel-bordered, down the dell,
While, with mournful sob and quiver,
Slowly, slowly, tolls the bell,
Voice of bird, or bell, or stream
Shall not break thy peaceful dream.

Indiana.

Aching hearts are throbbing, swelling,
With a deep and heavy pain;
Breasts are heaving, tears are welling,
Falling on the sod, like rain.
Sadly tolls the village bell -
Tolls each aching heart as well.

Indiana.

Quiet lives have most of beauty,
Noiseless goodness most endears.
Mother-love and wifely duty
Leave behind them saddest tears;
And the world can never know
Why thy dear ones miss thee so,

Indiana.

Drear the rooms that late did hold thee,
Where thy footsteps went and came;
Arms are empty that did fold thee,
Lips are white that spoke thy name.
Gone thy smile, thy gentle grace -
Ah, thy home's an empty place.

Indiana.

Where thy silent form reposes,
Creeping mosses, eglantine,
Glossy vines and summer roses,
Loving hands shall sadly twine.
Yet the fragrant blooms shall fall
O'er a sweeter flower than all—

Indiana.

Still and deep shall be thy slumber,
Lying with thy head so low;
Naught shall fret, no care shall cumber,
While the seasons come and go.
Fallen flower, with severed stem,
Thus I sing thy requiem,

Indiana.

Carrier's Address.

MDLXXV.

Hearken, kind friends. Upon this New Year's day,
While hand grasps hand with warm and friendly grip,
And joyful greetings leap from lip to lip,
Scorn not to hear the little I shall say;
For, call it what you will - a speech or song—
I promise one thing: it shall not be long.

To hold before you the historic roll
Of seventy-four I don't pretend to try,
(You know the record quite as well as I)
Nor yet to open up the sealed scroll
Of seventy-five. I could not if I would,
And, what is more, I would not if I could.

Evil, catastrophe, may loom ahead,
Close wrapped in shadows. What would be the gain,
If one could strip them naked? Naught but pain.
We bear an evil twice which once we dread;
And as to good, to be most full, complete,
There must be some surprise to spice the sweet.

Some things have happened, and some others will,
No doubt. I offer you these sage reflections.
Instead of going over the elections,
And wailing over past and future ill.
The old year buried, vain regrets should cease,
While welcome we the New with songs of peace.

The world moves on: barred is the backward track
With debris of the ages. Time sweeps by,—
The months, the days, the moments, —noiselessly:
And always, always onward, never back.
Time hath no ebbs: its tides flow steadily.
Ever, forever, toward a shoreless sea.

The past is buried; rake not up the sod
For mouldering bones, nor water it with tears.
Along with buried hopes let buried fears
Rest in darkness. Merciful the clod
Which hides what it were pain to look upon—
The "might have beens", the good deeds left undone.

Let the dead sleep: the present lives, we know:
To grapple that is all. None ever may
Do aught of good or evil yesterday.
Its tale is told and ended—let it go.
And, for to-morrow, not yet need we bear
(Perchance we never need) its grief and care.

* * * * *

The days go by,—how swift their flying feet!
The year just born will soon be old and gray.
And down the swallowing past be swept away.
And this poor life—so dear, so frail and fleet—
Is made but of such quickly vanished years.
Ends with a pall, a grave, and mourners' tears.

The days go by: we cannot stay their flight.
But he who fills them fullest as they fly.
His year is longest—since 'tis measured by
What it contains. Fourscore were but a night,
Live in a dungeon: and scarce more it seems,
Wasted in trifling, or in empty dreams.

Fourscore.

Sire with the silver hair,
Shrunkn whose features are,
 Why dost thou weep?
Sad art thou, weary one,
Nearing the set of sun,
That thy work nobly done,
 Ends with a sleep!

Cheer these: thy hands are worn,
Bleeding thy feet and torn;—
 Wouldst thou not rest?
On yonder Silent Shore
Soundeth no battle-roar:
There shall fierce storms no more
 Beat on thy breast.

Struggle and toil and care,
Sure thou hast borne thy share;
 Strength is but let.
Young limbs are strong and free,
Young shoulders take from thee
Loads that weigh heavily:—
 Be thou content.

Under cool grasses sweet,
Creeping at head and feet,
 Thus shalt thou sleep.
Under the autumn glow,
Under the winter snow,
Never a pang to know—
 Why dost thou weep?

After the peaceful night
Cometh the fadeless light—
 (Hope of the just).

After the sword and shield,
Palms shall the victor wield.
Count it, then, gain to yield
Dust unto dust.

Fame.

Thou who canst rouse, by power of song,
The heart of the throng,
See thou stir not its lowest deep,
Wake not the chords that are best asleep,
Lest echoes fell
Shall vex thine ear and affright thy soul,
Lest the praise which is blame— which shall work the dole —
Shall around thee swell.

Fame is like wine—a cup to sip
With temperate lip.
Taste the sparkles that bead the rim,
It shall quicken the blood through brain and limb;
But, drain it dry,
Thou shalt age in heart while young in years;
Thou shalt learn what heartaches, sighs and tears
In the bottom lie.

The Fate of a Genius.

Among the New York hills, in a land of snow and sleet,
Where the folks plow down to hard-pan to sow their rye and
wheat,
Where the children climb the steeps as they trudge away to
school,
There dwelt a toiling genius, whom his neighbors called a
fool.

The puzzle and the wonder of all the country town,
His name was—well, no matter—suppose we call him Brown.
His form was bowed and shaky, he talked with hollow
sound;

And when he walked he always kept his eyes upon the
ground.

He had daughters, he had sons, and to them did this befall:
From the good folks in the Bible he named them, one and
all.

They were Abraham and Jacob, Matthew, Mark and Jere-
miah,

There were Rachel and Rebecca, Peter, Job and Hezekiah.

They lived and grew in spite of the ancient names they
bore;

They ate—when they could get it—and swarmed about the
door,

Like other people's children; yet shadows o'er them hung,
And oft were they assailed by the scorn of taunting tongue.

I have told you how the neighbors said their father was a
fool,

And thus on their young heads fell the shafts of ridicule.

They were ragged and neglected, their days were glum and
drear,

With their mother always sad, and their father was always
poor.

And this was what did ail him: he had a settled notion

That he was called and sent to invent perpetual motion.

This was his one idea: and so it came to pass,

That his children oft went hungry and his farming went—
to grass.

He shut himself apart, with bolts and bars and screens,

In a dingy little den, where he built his droll machines.

Unearthly combinations beneath his hands did grow;

But one thing always ailed them—'twas this, they wouldn't
go.

The wife (poor woman!) died. She had borne the load of
two;
But her weary work was over, her cheerless journey through.
The children, one by one, left the ancestral door,
With their odd and ancient names for their only stock and
store.

Still the old man toiled and pondered. His hair grew thin
and gray;
Lower he stooped and lower, as the years they slipped away;
He poorer grew and poorer, till not a cent he had;
And his eye grew mild and milder;—at last old Brown went
mad.

But his madness had its method. And his darkened brain
Still groped the one idea that had been his curse and bane.
In a dazed and absent fashion he talked of wheels and
bands,

And whittled wooden pulleys with his long and bony hands.

The poor old man lay dying;—'twas a stormy winter night;
O'er his forehead, cold and damp, strayed his locks so thin
and white.

As his feet slipped down the bank where the silent river
flows,

He smiled and faintly whispered,—“I've got it—now it
goes!”

Unbelief.

O ye who stand aloft on Pisgah's mountain,
And view with kindling gaze far fields of bliss,
Condemn not him who sits at Marah's fountain,
Or wanders blindly through the wilderness.

And ye who sail, calm hands of faith uplifting,
By chart and compass, with your port in sight,
O! pity him who floats, bewildered, drifting,
Upon an unknown sea, amid the night.

A glorious thing is faith—that scales the mountain:
That rides secure where unbelief must sink.
Ye say there pours for all a ceaseless fountain:
Yet—pity him that thirsts and cannot drink.

Ye offer him your creed; he asks “Whence is it—
From heaven, or of men?” and to your grief,
He doubts and questions, and at last denies it.
Is he to blame? Can one compel belief?

Condemn him not. His feet are bruised and weary
With wandering to and fro; his aching breast,
So sore with longing; in the darkness dreary
He gropes for light, and prays in vain for rest.

But, if he say: I will stop here, and hither
Will I bring all my blocks and build my tower,
And will not, henceforth, wander any-whither—
He rests—but ceases thinking from that hour.

Better to wander, still, a little season—
Better to drift at night on unknown seas—
Than rest in creeds untried by test of reason—
Better the doubter's pain than stagnant ease.

A Message.

I sit in the twilight, thinking;
The full round moon rides high,
And a single star its silvery lamp
Hangs out in the tinted sky

The loud, wild winds are sleeping,
But a breeze on the highlands born,
Just stirs the stalks of the withered grass,
Just rustles the hoary corn.

The silent frost comes creeping
Over the prairie's breast,
And the deepening night, with dusky wing,
Broods over a land at rest.

Still I sit here, sadly thinking,
Oh! dear ones, kind and true!
From out the hush of the silent night
My heart would speak to you.

I call across the darkness,
In eager, passionate tone;
I reach out longingly to touch
The hands that have clasped my own.

But alas! two mighty rivers
Mock at my outstretched hand;
Two mighty rivers lie between,
And many a league of land.

Vainly I call; and the distance
Vainly I seek to span;
You heed not, hear not, my eager words,
And they neither bless nor ban.

Lo! a bit of snow-white paper!
Some magic shall give it wings;—
I trow such messages as this
Have shaken thrones of kings.

It shall cleave the night and the silence,
It shall flutter down to your feet:
Ye shall know the love in my heart of hearts—
Thus sundered souls do greet.

— — — — —

At the Garden Gate.

A summer night, and late,
In the full splendor of a harvest moon,
They stood at the garden gate—
Two, singing the old, old tune!
They sang it low,
With voices falling oft to whispers sweet—
The notes all know.

Ah, life—mere life—was sweet
To those two, leaning on the garden gate!
There did their two roads meet,
Thenceforth but one—one hope, one fate.
No shadow lies
Amid the moonbeams on her golden hair,
Nor in her lifted eyes.

Sweet love and trust!
So fresh, so beautiful when life is young,
So often crushed!
How sped the low, sweet song on that night sung?
Swift flew the years,
Bringing life's burdens on their pauseless wings,
Its smiles and tears.

But the same love, through all,
Burned on in steady trust, in fadeless ray.
Now crept along the wall
Shadows that told the waning of the day.
Harvests had come and gone,
One after one, in cycles ever new—
Old age crept on.

Once more, in the summer weather,
They leaned upon the same old garden gate—
Leaned, as of old, together—
The harvest moon resplendent, night, and late.
The old eyes met,
As in that other moonlight, long ago—
With sweet tears wet.

“My love,” he faltered,
Laying his hand upon her whitened hair;
The voice was altered,
With little breaks and quavers, here and there—
“My love, ’twas long ago!
I did believe thee loving, pure and sweet,
But *now* I *know*.

“My sweet wife, you and I
Have shared much grief, and many precious boons:
But lo, the end is nigh!
We shall not watch through many harvest moons
The pale light quiver;
Pray, darling, that we clasp immortal hands
Beyond the river.”

The Night Lamp.

It is a summer midnight—silent hour!
The stars look down upon a world at rest:
Closed are bright eyes, and closed the morning flower;
Night holds to earth her dewy forehead prest.

The village sleeps—upon the painted walls,
And on the graveled walks and roofs of brown.
Through old and hoary trees the moonlight falls,
In tangled, trembling net-work creeping down.

The village sleeps—yet yonder gleams a light,
From out a narrow door, wide open flung.
Sickly and wan, it sends into the night
A tale of woe upon its mournful tongue.

What is it that it tells? The village sleeps—
Sweet childhood smiles to bright dreams flitting o'er;
Love nestles in soft arms, but sorrow weeps!
Death stands relentless in that open door.

A woman kneels beside a lowly bed—
A woman humbly clad, and old and gray;
Here lies her own, her *att.* and he is dead!
To midnight such as this, when comes the day?

Not in *this* world! The touch of dewy morn
Shall wake from its soft sleep the silent town:
But till the day that never sets is born,
On this old heart is midnight folded down!

A Little Longer.

A little longer the winds shall blow
From the still white billows of frozen seas,—
Shall shriek through the branches of naked trees,
And heap the valleys with hills of snow.

A little longer the land shall lie,
Corpse-like, silent, wrapped in a shroud,
While storms hold wake like a drunken crowd,
A fierce, wild rout—but the end is nigh.

A deathless heart in a frozen breast,
Far out of the reach of frost or storm,
Throbs with a beat as soft and warm
As the pulse of a babe in its rosy rest.

A little longer the winter-night—
The silent sleeper shall wake at morn.—
Shall wake and sing, with joy new-born,
Wreathed with violets, crowned with light.

Looking out over wastes of snow,
Vast and boundless,—a realm of death,—
We long for the south-wind's gentle breath,
For carol of birds, and for water's flow.

A little longer to feel the sting
Of the creeping frost, and against the blast
To close our doors and bolt them fast—
Then to fling them wide at the touch of Spring!

O days of sorrow! O Storms of Fate!
Could we see the end, when clouds hang low,
As we see the Spring through the Winter's snow,
And know it would come—we well could wait!

The Old Butternut Tree.

It stood by the old front gate—oh, long ago.—
Braving the summer storm and the winter snow;
And fresh amon memory's treasures, so dear to me,
Stands in perpetual greenness that ancient tree.

Out on the roadside green, where passing feet
Turned to its wide-spread shade from the dusty street,
And laughing children, loitering home from school,
Sought, with their cheeks aflame, its shadows cool.

Here gathered the early birds, and built and sung;
The oriole's cunning nest from the branches swung;
Its broad arms sheltered from the noontide's blaze;
And the nuts dropped on the turf in the autumn days.

In summer eves, when work was laid away,
And rest and coolness ended the sultry day,
When up the west the sunset unrolled its gold,
Like billows of gorgeous sea, fold over fold,

Then gathered the household band about the knee
Of the old Butternut, the homestead tree
They watched till the glow went out and dew came down,
And the moon wore up the east her silver crown.

All were together then: where are they now?
The world is wide, as the sundered dear ones know;
And children, cradled on the mother's breast,
Scattered, like eaglets from their mountain nest.

The brothers are bearded men, and threads of gray
Whiten the clustering locks from day to day.
Each lights his household fire—so must it be—
While strangers sit in the shade of the dear old tree.

But one sleeps on the hill, one far away,
And the gray-haired sire has lain, this many a day,

By the side of the mother who sang sweet lullabies,
And followed our childish feet with her gentle eyes.

A generation has passed and been laid away;
But the dear old roadside tree stands there to-day.
Hoary, lopped, and scared by many a storm,
Yet the summers still veil with leaves its battered form.

Still stream through the broken boughs the sunset rays;
Still drop the nuts on the turf in the autumn days;
But the olden joys can never come back to me,
And the household gods have flown the homestead tree.

The Pity of it.

It seems so strange to watch the crowd
That gathers on some festal day,
To mark the lowly and the proud,
Aglow with mirth, and I think that they
Are but a throng of misquers gay.
'Tis true that some show signs of grief;
Yon sad-eyed widow wears her weeds;
Yon mother mourns her fallen leaf,
And tells you how her bosom bleeds.

Yon soldier, battered in the wars,
Moving with painful step, and slow,
Limps proudly, proudly wears his scars; —
Such hurts as these all men may know.
But deeper sorrow, keener throes,
Are hidden by a careless smile,
And laughter on the lips the while
The heart is torn and no one knows.

The pity of this earthly life
Is, that the deepest heartaches lie
Beyond the reach of sympathy;

The sorest wounds are got in strife
Waged in the dark, where none may see,
Oft hiding still the rankling knife
That tortures with slow misery,

I see my neighbor come and go
With airy speech and smiling lip;
I call him gay—I little know
What unseen hand, with deadly grip
Clutches his heart, what tortures slow
Wears out his life, while borne alone,
As ceaseless dropping wears a stone.

If floods destroy, if fires consume,
Full hands reach out in charity;
Across misfortune's darkest gloom
Shine kindly rays of sympathy:
If a friend dies a tolling bell
May to the world the story tell.
But deeper griefs than these there be—

The death's head in the closet hid
Is ghastlier than the still white face,
Or the cold hands, in waxen grace
Lying beneath the coffin lid.
A living woe from mortal eyes
Is curtained close; the direst strife
Is in the breast—And herein lies
The pity of this earthly life.

A Home out West.

I

A "Prairie schooner," creeping slow;
Away-worn, jaded household band,
In eager voices speaking low—
Thus enter we the "Promised land."
Behind us now the river's tide,
Rolls dark and murky, deep and wide.

* * * * *

II

A warm May day; a sweet soft rain
On a green prairie falling fast;
A stopping of the creeping wane,
And the glad cry, "we are home at last."
After long weeks of travel sore,
The goal is won: we ask no more.

Home! With our roof the dripping sky,
Our floor the rainsoaked prairie's breast!
Through all the wastes that round us lie,
In wild, luxuriant verdure dressed,
No tree extends its friendly bough,
We seek no track of spade or plow.

* * * * *

III

A year has fled. What wondrous change
Has passed this way? What sorcery,
What silent magic, swift and strange,
Has wrought such wonders? Come and see!
Where are the green wastes, soaked with rain?
You seek them? You shall seek in vain.

Spring smiles again; the sunbeams play
On gabled roof and crystal pane.

Spring smiles again; and skies of May
Bend o'er broad fields of waving grain.
Here are young orchards; and the breeze
Bends the lithe limbs of forest trees.

The spring rains beat on snowy walls,
Comely, though plain, snug built and strong;
Through vine wreathed windows sunshine falls,
With cheerful smile, the whole day long;
And happy faces, fresh and bright,
Are gathered around the lamps at night.

Our prairie home is sweet and dear;
The deep rich soil holds honest wealth,
The airs we breathe are pure and clear;
The free, strong winds waft life and health.
Here dwells content from day to day;
So—let the great world go its way

Beautiful Things.

Beautiful faces are those that wear—
It matters little if dark or fair—
Whole-souled honesty printed there.

Beautiful eyes are those that show,
Like crystal panes where hearth fires glow,
Beautiful thoughts that burn below.

Beautiful lips are those whose words
Leap from the heart like songs of birds,
Yet whose utterances prudence girds.

Beautiful hands are those that do
Work that is earnest, brave and true,
Moment by moment the long day through.



Beautiful lives are those that bless—
Silent rivers and happiness,
Whose hidden fountains few may guess.

Beautiful feet are those that go
On timely ministries to and fro—
Down lowliest ways, if God wills it so.

Beautiful shoulders are those that bear
Ceaseless burdens of homely care
With patient grace and with daily prayer.

Beautiful lives are those that bless
Silent rivers and happiness,
Whose hidden fountains but few may guess.

Beautiful twilight, at set of sun,
Beautiful goal with race well run,
Beautiful rest, with work well done.

Beautiful graves, where grasses creep,
Where brown leaves fall, where drifts lie deep
Over worn out hands—oh, beautiful sleep.

Discontent.

Herein is human nature most perverse:
We spurn the gifts that lie about our door,
Tread on them in our scorn, and madly nurse
A gnawing hunger that still cries for more.

And this for mortals all life's blessing mars,
Turning to bitterness its offered sweet.
We climb up dizzy crags to grasp the stars,
While unplucked roses bloom about our feet.

The stars are out of reach: the slippery steep
Prove treacherous footholds, and we trip and fall.
Crushed are the roses; disappointment weeps
O'er bleeding bruises: and that ends it all.

We stretch our empty arms with longing sore,
To clasp the mocking phantom of a dream:
We pant with thirst while standing on a shore
Kissed by the ripples of a living stream.

From sweet, pure waters do we turn aside.
Lured by false fountains in the desert gray:
We chase a vision o'er expanses wide
To find it grow more distant, day by day.

Why do we so? Could we but learn to take,
With thankful hearts, the blessings at our hand.
To drink near springs, nor chase the phantom lake
That swiftly vanishes along the sand!

Suppose we gain our quest: suppose we taste—
Aye, even drink our fill, with lips afire—
Repentant leisure treads the heels of haste:
In sad, remorseful tears ends fierce desire.

Life is too short to waste in vain pursuit
Of swift delight that through the finger slips,
Or, caught and held, oft proves a Dead Sea fruit,
That turns to bitter ashes on the lips.

Gentle Spring.

These are signs of gentle spring:
Flocks of wild geese on the wing,
Flying in a broken string;

Brooks that tumble, roar and rush,
Sinking drifts, and piles of slush,
And a universal mush.

Woman with a draggled dress,
Puddles that seem bottomless,
Roads all ditto—such a mess!

Horses flounder, loaded down;
Swearing driver—been to town—
Curses, plunges —overthrown!

Fancy sleighs for sale at cost,
Balmy breezes, nipping frost,
Wild march mornings, tempest-tossed.

Robins, bluebirds, sleet and snow,
Icy winds, and sunny glow —
What comes next you never know.

Sounds of coughs and choking wheezes,
And of loud, spasmodic sneezes,
Mingle with the straying breezes.

Handkerchiefs are bought and sold
By the dozen, I am told.
Question—"Have you had your cold?"

Come, ye singers, rise and sing!
Poets, tune your every string
For an ode to gentle spring.

The Sleeping Village.

The village sleeps; the moonbeams fall,
Pale, still, and cold, on roof and wall,
And flood the empty street.
How still! The dust lies all unstirred;
No sound of rolling wheels is heard,
No tread of passing feet.

Where traffic hurried to and fro,
Only the night-winds come and go,
Whirling the dead leaves by.
The cold lake laps its pebbled shore;
And round each closely bolted door
The frost creeps silently.

The village sleeps—O blessed rest!
With hard hands folded on its breast.
Lies overburdened Toil;
Grief smiles in dreams, its woe forgot;
Pale want forgets its dreary lot;
The springs of Care uncoil.

The fevers that infest the day
Yield to the night, and sink away
To pulse soft and even.
E'en Joy is still; Love nestles deep
In clasping arms, whose touch makes sleep
A calm as sweet as heaven.

The night grows deeper; colder falls
The moonlight on the silent walls;
Still creeps the stealthy frost;
And deeper grows the calm of rest
In throbbing brain and troubled breast
By day so passion-tost.

O blessings priceless, Night and Sleep!
Did never close the eyes that weep;
Did struggle never cease;
Did ne'er the balm of Rest come down
Upon the weary, toiling town—
Then death were sole release.

A Dirge.

The wind of autumn blows,
So cold, so cold;
The wind of autumn blows,
Dead is the summer rose,
And the withered grass lies rotting on the mould.

The frost creeps round the door,
So still, so still;
The frost creeps round the door,
The cricket sings no more,
No more at twilight pleads the whip-po-wil.

But I hear the owlet's cry,
Forlorn, forlorn;
I hear the owlet's cry,
When the waning moon is high,
And the raccoon's greedy call among the corn.

I mourn the summer dead,
So soon, so soon;
I mourn the summer dead,
With all its glory fled,
As I stand beneath the frosty waning moon.

And I think how life is going—
So fast, so fast,
I think how life is going,
How swift its tides are flowing,
How we scarcely hail our summer, ere 'tis past.

The Old Stone Quarry.

Grown with grass and with tangled weeds,
Where the blind mole hides and the rabbit feeds,
And, unmolested, the serpent breeds.

Edged with underwood, newly grown,
Draped with the cloak that the years have thrown
Round the broken gaps in the jagged stone.

It was opened—I know not how long ago—
Opened, and left half-worked, and so
In this ragged hollow the rank weeds grow.

Why lies it idle, this beautiful stone?
Ho, for the pickaxe! One by one
Hew out these blocks—here is work undone.

There are possible towers in this serpent's den—
Possible homes for homeless men.
Who shall build them? and where? and when?

Must they lie here still, unmarked, unsought—
Turrets and temples, uncarved, unwrought,
Till the end of time? 'Tis a sorrowful thought!

All through the heats of the summer hours,
The wild bee hums in the unplucked flowers
That creep and bloom over unbuilt towers.

As I sit here, perched on the grass-grown wall,
Down to the hollow the brown leaves fall,
Little by little covering all.

So month after month, and year after year,
The rank weeds creep and the leaves turn sere.
And a thicker mantle is weaving here.

And a day may come when the passer-by,
Threading the underwood, then grown high,
Shall see but a hollow, where dead leaves lie.

There are human souls that seem to me
Like this unwrought stone—for all you see—
Is a shapeless quarry of what might be,

Lying idle, and overgrown
With tangled weeds, like this beautiful stone—
Possible work left undone,
Possible victories left unwon.

And that is a waste that is worse than this;
Sharper the edge of the hidden abyss,
Deadlier serpents crawl and hiss.

And a day shall come when the desolate scene,
Though scanned by eyes that are close and keen,
Shall show no trace of its "might have been."

Departed.

I sat one day at the door of a tomb,
In from the stir of the busy street,
I entered a house, in whose every room
Were viewless prints of departed feet.

All was familiar: the light shone through
On books and tables, on pictured wall;
They were well known objects that met my view,
Yet a shadowy change was over them all.

With aching heart and with starting tear,
I longed for glances I did not meet,
For a woman's voice that I did not hear,
For a loving hand-clasp, warm and sweet.

Radiant eyes where the true heart shone;
Light feet speeding at duty's call;
Hands so busy:—(their work is done)
Tongue cannot tell how I miss them all.

I miss them all; and I miss as well
The household darling, the maiden mild;
Her music that charmed with its magic spell;
The winsome ways of a happy child.

O earnest matron! O maiden sweet.
My heart would ache and the tears would come,
As I turned again to the busy street,
Saying but little—for grief is dumb.

Night and Sleep.

The night is long, for I cannot sleep.
No midnight sorrow makes me weep,
But I "count a hundred" and then "count two,"
And no sort of use—for its wild tattoo
My pulse keeps beating. There must be
Something uncommon that's ailing me.

There's a rush and a tramp through my throbbing brain;
Such wonderful thoughts—in endless train—
Come in crowds, and, link into link,
They tangle so, while I think and think!
Now they march to some doleful rhyme,
And then with dizzying step keep time.

How loud the clock goes! tick, and tick.
With a little ring after every click;
And now it strikes—the hour is one—
Ah me, what a dolefully solemn tone!
Strange as it seems, I truly say
That I haven't heard it before, to-day.

There's a cricket singing shrill and long—
Was ever a cricket with voice so strong?
Without, the night is deep and still;
The owl is *not* hooting on the hill,
No low of kine, no bleat of flock,
Only the cricket, and ticking clock!

The moon pours in with a cold white gleam
Through the window panes, a steady stream;
Slowly, slowly, it crosses the floor,
And lies in white at the farther door,
I fancy a ghost with silent feet
Crossing the room in a winding sheet!

Oh, blessings priceless, Night and Sleep!
Did never close the eyes that weep—
In the weary brain, where thoughts are ground,
Did a ceaseless wheel go round and round
With never a pause for sleep—Ah me,
How wearily long one's life would be!

The clock strikes three, and then ticks lower;
The feverish thoughts come slow, and slower;
My pulses fall to temperate time;
Drowsily floats the lazy rhyme;
Soothing visions my senses steep—
I think—I think—I'm going to sleep.

Birthday Greeting.

To General M. Breyman, on His Birthday.
Another year, and still another May:
Think not, O friend, that ever I forget—
Though doubtful oft of my own onward way—
Where are thy mile stones set.

Not many more, you say. The day declines;
The long, eventful journey nears its close,
The misty sunbeams fall in slanting lines
Though seas of gold and rose.

Gentle the down-hill slope. Love walks beside,
With tender words and with caresses sweet,
Folds thee in clasping arms, lest ill betide,
Supports thy falling feet.

The eve draws on; the setting sun hangs low;
Cometh the peaceful twilight, dim and gray:
Yet hope is thine, and Faith in whisper low,
Tells of a brighter day.

Some token of true friendship would I bring,
But neither gold nor silver shall it be.
Accept, dear friend, the little song I sing—
My birthday gift to thee.

In the Caboose

"Train delayed? and what's to say?"
"Blocked by last night's snow they say."
Seven hours or so to wait;
Well, that's pleasant! but there's the freight.
Depot loading no one fancies,
We'll try the caboose and take our chances.

Cool this morning in Watertown,
Somewhat frosty—mercury down:
Enter caboose—roaring fire,
With never an air-hole; heat so dire
That we shrivel and pant; we are roasted through—
Outside, thermometer thirty-two.

We start with a jerk and suddenly stop.
"What's broke?" says one; another "What's up?",
"Oh, nothing," they answer, "That's our way:
You must stand the jerking, sorry to say."
We "stand it" with oft this painful thought:
Are our heads on yet, or are they not?

Comrades in misery—let me see;
Girl like a statue opposite me;
Back and forth the others jostle—
She never winks, nor moves a muscle;
See her, as she sits there now:
She's "well balanced," anyhow.

Woman in trouble, tearful eyes,
Sits by the window, softly cries,
Pity—for griefs we may not know,
For breasts that ache, for tears that flow,
Though we know not why. Her eyelids red
Tell a sorrowful tale—some hope is dead.

Man who follows the Golden Rule,
And lends his papers—a pocket full,
Has a blank book—once in a minute
Has an idea, and writes it in it.
Guess him? Yes, of course I can,
He's a—well—a newspaper man.

Blue-eyed fairy, wrapped in fur;
Sweet young mother tending her.
Fairy thinks it's "awful far,"
Wants to get off this "naughty car."
So do we, young golden-hair:
All this crowd are with you there!

Crazy Nell.

A bent and stooping spine,
A broken staff, with twine
Mended well;
A bundle on a crook,
A mild, yet gentle look,
And a nose so sharp and thin
That it almost pierced the skin—
Crazy Nell!

Coming often to our door,
Twenty years ago, or more,
Crazy Nell,
With her bundle and her staff,
And her melancholy laugh,
Begged a humble place to lie—
Soft or hard—low or high,
It was well.

How we shuddered—how we cried—
And in corners shrank to hide,
In our fear.

For the thin and tattered rags,
As they hung in shreds and tags,
And the bundle and the staff,
And the sad and broken laugh,
 Were so queer.

But as we older grew,
We learned to pity, too,
 Crazy Nell;
For, in tender voice and low,
Did our mother tell us how
 Ere she fell
Into overtaking sin
This ghostly wreck had been
 A beauty and a belle.

A face so fair and sweet,
Was not seen upon the street,
 Anywhere,
And her blue eyes smiled for all,
From between a parted fall
 Of golden hair,
Where now the gray locks thin
Straggled to the wrinkled chin,
 Sharp and spare.

'Twas the tale so often told
In the ears of young and old –
 For she fell,
But, amid her suffering,
And with reason tottering,
 Gentle Nell,
Who beguiled with foul deceit,
And who tripped her careless feet,
 Would never tell.

So she bore it all alone,
'Til reason from her throne
 Crumbled down;

And her bundle and her staff
Were the cruel sport and laugh
Of the clown,
As she wandered, bent and old,
And sought the pity cold
Of the town.

But one cold November day,
She was found beside the way—
Crazy Nell;
With her head upon the sand,
And her staff within her hand.
And the bell,
In the steeple by the river,
With its mournful sob and quiver,
Tolled her knell.

And they laid her down below,
Where the summer grasses grow,
In the dell,
Who shall judge her so and so,
Lying there, with head so low?
Who shall tell
That the play is ended so?
Only 'tis the last we know
Of Crazy Nell.

Agassiz.

Let the earth mourn. A lover and a child
Of the great mother sleeps his last long sleep,
Let her winds wail in voices wierd and wild;
Let sobs disturb the bosom of the deep.

Nature's interpreter—who now shall find
And bring to light the meaning of her speech?
Who now shall stand with mien serene and kind,
And hold her lore within our easy reach?

He sought through sunless cares on mountains hoar,
The foot prints of the ages, blurred and dim;
And ocean chambers, deep beneath the roar
Of wind and wave, unrolled their scroll to him.

He saw and read the records, then he turned
And spoke to us with cheek and lips aglow.
We heard with awe, our hearts within us burned—
Such wonders had God written long ago!

The earth is His, He made it: and its leaves
Who so by patient scanning clearly reads,
Gathers to Wisdom's store-house golden sheaves,
Shall we not own him prophet of our needs?

Philosopher, such prophet, then, wast thou!
Yet is thy mantle fallen; who shall dare
Take up the radiant garment? Who shall now
Alike thy honors and thy burdens bear?

An Evening Monologue.

Friend of my soul, sit by me

In this evening calm, with the sun gone down.
While the wide west glows like a crimson sea,
Flooding with splendor the fields and the town.

Talk if you will, or idly dream,

With your gaze on the track of the vanished sun.
Our thoughts shall blend though silent the stream;
Speech and silence to us are one.

Up from the south comes a breath of spring:

It flutters your beard and lifts your hair;
Yonder a robin, with folded wing,
Sits and sings in the branches bare.

Sweet hour of peace! On the prairies brown,

On the quiet homestead's dun-gray walls,
On the silent lanes, on the distant town,
Like a benediction the twilight falls.

Slowly, softly, the roseate glow

Pales, yet lingers; the robin's tune
Is hushed to silence; a silver bow
Hangs on high—'tis the new white moon.

The moments pass. See that moving gleam!

Nearer it comes, swift, weirdly bright;
And a train, life-laden, with eerie scream,
Sweeps down the valley into the night.

The moments pass. We are wrapped about

With thickening shadows; one by one,
In the deep, dark blue, the stars shine out.
Night and silence—the day is done.

Of have we watched the daylight fade,
But a time must come we know—the last.
And the sweep of years will not be stayed;
The on-coming night is hastening fast.

Once, then, to watch while the darkness creeps,
And you or I—oh! which shall it be?—
Must wake and weep while the other sleeps.
Old and alone—ah, me! ah, me!

Trouble.

If an evil can be cured,
Set thyself to cure it;
If 'tis but to be endured,
Bravely, then, endure it.
Weak complaint and peevish fret
Never banished trouble yet:—
They do but insure it.

Grief hast thou, full hardly borne—
Time hath touch of healing.
Patience, yet may rays of morn
Through the night come stealing.
Trouble yet may prove a friend,
Stern, yet faithful, in the end,
Highest use revealing.

Dost thou, sad-eyed passer-by,
Bear a living sorrow—
Secret pain that may not cry—
May no pity borrow?
While thy tears in darkness flow,
Seest thou no gleams that show
Glimpse of bright to-morrow?

Patience yet; thou hopeless one!
With thy best endeavor
Give thy life. 'Tis lightly spun —
Lightest touch may sever.
At the last are rest and peace,
Serest trouble's calm surcease —
Grief is not forever.

Then and Now.

Bleak, rugged, hills, o'er which the winter snow
In wild gusts swept;
A sweet, green vale, a calm lake, lying low,
Where osiers dipt;
A clear, cool spring, whose trickling overflow,
Through tall grass crept.

There were some hearts that love me. Till my own
Shall cease to beat,
Whether I tread smooth ways, or jagged stone
With bleeding feet,
I still shall hold them precious (love alone
Can make life sweet.)

Long years have fled. Still stand, deep scarred and hoar,
The wind swept heights;
Still flows the spring, where parched lips, thirsting sore,
Quaff deep delights;
Still sleeps the lake, by moonbeams silvered o'er
On summer nights.

All these remain: scarce changed the peaceful scene,
Yet men grow old.
Locks that were dark are touched with frosty sheen;
Have hearts grown cold?
To know some few have kept the old love green—
'Twere joy untold.

A Country Home.

A nook among the hills, a little farm,
Whose fertile acres yield us daily bread;
A homely, low-browed dwelling, snug and warm,
With wide blue skies hung overhead.

No costly splendor here no gilded glow;
No dear bought pictures hang upon the walls;
But bright and happy faces come and go,
And through the windows God's sweet sunshine falls.

We are not rich in heaps of hoarded gold;
We are not poor, for we can keep at bay
The poor man's hunting spectres, want and cold,
Can keep from owing debts we cannot pay.

With wholesome plenty is our table spread,
With genial comfort glows our evening fire;
The fierce night winds may battle overhead -
Safe in our shelter, though strife be dire.

When days grow long, and winter's storms are o'er,
Here come the first birds of the early spring,
And build their cunning nests beside the door,
Teaching sweet lessons as they work and sing.

Here come our friends - a dear and cherished few -
Dearer, perchance, than if they numbered more;
We greet them with a hand-clasp warm and true,
And give them of the best we have in store.

What though the rooms be small, and low the roof?
What though we can but offer simple fare?
It matters not; so friendships warp and woof
Are spun of gold, for these we need not care

We hear the great world surging like a sea,
But the loud roar of winds and waves at war,
Subdued by distance, comes melodiously,
A soft and gentle murmur, faint and far.

We see the small go up, the great come down,
And bless the peaceful safety of our lot.
The broken scepter and the toppling crown,
And crash of falling thrones—these shake us not.

We have some weary toil to struggle through,
Some trials, that we bravely strive to meet;
We have our sorrows, as all mortals do;
We have our joys, too, pure, and calm, and sweet.

Is such a life too even in its flow?
Too silent, calm, too barren of event?
Its very joys to still? I do not know;
I think he conquers all who wins content.

Found—Not Too Late.

From yonder church a wedding
Came forth one day,
Only in this particular—
It was late in the day;
For the locks of the bride and bridegroom
Were streaked with gray.

Their youth lay far behind them;
Alone had tried
The up-grades of life's mountain,
This groom and bride.
They now clasp hands together
On the downhill side.

Broadly the stupid wondered;
Yet, still and calm,
Sweet peace held close above them
Her boughs of palm,
And touched the wounds of old battles
With healing balm.

A year had passed. At nightfall
I saw them stand
At the door of a vine-wreathed cottage—
Hand held in hand—
While the tides of a crimson sunset
O'erflowed the land.

The crimson ebbed; the shadows
Stole down the dell;
With its peaceful benediction,
The twilight fell,
And the faint, sweet tone came floating
Of a far-off bell.

I listened, and heard a sentence
With meaning great.
The wife was whispering softly,
"The perfect mate,
After long years of waiting,
Found—not too late."

A Bride of a Day.

Oh! sing a song; in low, soft notes,
Tender, and sweet, in sad—
For her who lies all pallid, still.
In her last garments clad.

A fair young bride of but a day—
(Sing low, sing soft and low)—
And yet, and yet her bed must be
Under the drifting snow.

Under the drifting snow—ah, me!—
To lie in her frozen sleep,
While love, bereft, with empty arms,
Is left to wake and weep.

But yesternorn, how bright her smile!
How soft the blush that rose,
Mantling the white of neck and brow,
As sunset tints the snows.

With tender light her dark eyes shone;
Sweet was the roseate glow;
Alas! how little thought we then,
Her sun had dipped so low.

Through all the hours one mourner sits,
Watching her pulseless rest,
With dumb, white lips and hopeless look,
And head bowed on his breast.

Ah, death! thy ways are dark and strange—
Passing age and sorrow by,
While youth and joy along thy track
All scathed and blasted lie.

Weighing the World.

I weighed the world to-day—its golden treasure,
Its gleam and glitter, all its splendid show,
Its pride, its fame—in most unstinted measure—
All its allurements that do tempt me so.

I put them in a balance, all together,
Against one heart—but one, yet surely mine.
I wished for once to know for certain whether
This way, or that way, would the scales incline.

Then slowly rose the piled-up, shining masses,
As slowly, surely, did that one thing fall.
So I have weighed; and thus the verdict passes:
I find that one true heart is worth them all.

A Dream.

I dreamed a dream in a winter night,
When sullen winds blew about the door,
And over the snow fields, cold and white,
And through the forest with muffled roar.

Through all the wintry sounds, I heard
The rustle of a tiny wing;
And wildly carolled a dear brown bird—
The bird that sings at the gates of spring.

My pulses leaped with a sudden thrill!
Was the winter gone? I thought in my sleep—
Had spring come in with that silvery trill?
Would storms no longer their wassails keep?

I woke—and there came, in frosty bars,
The light of a pale and gloomy moon,
And the far, faint twinkle of the misty stars;
And the cold winds chanted their midnight tune.

Gone was the rustle of tiny wing;
Silent the song of the dear brown bird;
Closely barred stood the gates of spring.
And the chant of the wind was all I heard.

So the pilgrim dreams; and he hears afar
The harps of gold; and the radiant gleam
Comes flashing through the gates ajar
Of the sea of glass, and the crystal stream.

But he wakes; and closed are the pearly gates;
Gone is the music, the flash and gleam;
But he goes his way, and in patience waits—
He goes his way, but keeps his dream!

Days We Remember.

Days that glide in an even rhyme
To which our feet keep steady time—
Be they in May or December;—
Days when life is a summer sea,
Whereon lie ships rocked dreamily;
Days when an easy round of care,
Is all the load that our shoulders bear;
Days that a calm succession keep
Of peaceful labor and peaceful sleep;
Days that serenely slip away,
With little of sorrow, yet scarcely gay;—
Are not the days that we remember.

Days that are fraught with throbs of bliss,
With love's caress, with love's close kiss—
Be they in May or December;—
Days when rush through our wilderness
Whelming torrents of happiness;
Days when the heart, in its joyous swell,
Beats and throbs like a festive bell;

And days, oh! days when we sit alone
With dumb, white lips that make no moan,
By close-sealed vaults, whose chambers cold
Our loveliest, dearest treasures hold;
When, as the heavy hours drag by,
We long—and long in vain—to die;—
These are the days that we remember.

On the Prairie.

Out on the prairie—a shrieking storm!
How the pitiless cold, driven from homes and firesides warm,
In its terrible hold,
Here grapples and grips with strength untold!

Miles and miles, and nothing in sight,
Only sweeps of snow—
That under the dust of the gathering night,
Now dimmer grow—breasting the winds that fiercely blow.

Not a friendly light, not a sheltering tree,
On the prairie's breast,
And my failing feet shrink under me!
I am heavy—oppressed
With a drowsy weight; I must stop and rest.

No, I can not go on! Here I lay me down,
While the storm sweeps by;
Press on, if you can, to the sheltering town;
In peace let me lie,
I am not cold . . . only sleepy . . . good-by.

The Old Farmhouse.

A crystal spring, a sunny hill,
A gray old house with mossy sill,
 Hemmed in by orchard trees.
With massive trunks of age untold,
Whose luscious fruits, like mounds of gold
When autumn nights grow crisp and cold,
 Lay heaped about their knees.

And when the trees, bare, gaunt and grim,
Tossing aloft each naked limb,
 Breasted the sleety rain:
When the summer sounds were heard no more,
When birds had sought a southern shore,
When flowers lay dead about the door,
 And winter reigned again:

Then met the household band beside
A clean swept hearth, a chimney wide,
 Where roared a maple fire.
When all the streams were fettered fast,
When fiercely blew the wintry blast,
And clouds of snow went whirling past,
 The logs were piled the higher.

How fondly memory recalls
The cheer within those old gray walls,
 Beside that shining hearth.
O peaceful scene of calm content!
Where happy faces came and went,
And heart with heart was closely blent,
 In sadness as in mirth!

I see them all: the aged sire
Deep in some book; the glowing fire
 Gleams on his silver hair.

The mother knits; her loving eye
Smiles on the children flitting by;
Her needles, clicking as they fly,
Tell of her household care.

A group of stalwart boys I see,
Brimful of mirth—as boys will be—
When evening tasks were done;
And—least of all—a little maid,
Her small head crowned with auburn braid,
Who, when the merry games were played,
Was foremost in the fun.

How gay we were! what songs we sang,
Till the old walls with echoes rang,
While the wind roared without.
Again we sat, wild-eyed and pale,
And listened to some ancient tale—
How witches rode upon the gale,
Or white ghosts roamed about.

'Twas long ago: those days are o'er;
I hear those songs no more, no more,
Yet listen while I weep.
Time rules us all. No joys abide.
That household band is scattered wide,
And some lie on the green hillside,
Wrapped in a dreamless sleep.

Friends that I Used to Know.

The storm of the day is past;
The rain has a fainter sound,
Yet low-hung clouds their misty skirts
Trail over the sodden ground.

The heavy twilight falls;
The clouds trail more and more,
And the early darkness stealthily creeps
Up to the farmhouse door.

I sit, in the gathering night,
By the fire—it is burning low—
And think, with a longing akin to pain,
Of the friends that I used to know.

And a thrilling vision sweeps
Through the chambers of my brain:
Gone are the mist, the darkening room,
And the prairie soaked with rain.

I see the friends I love,
(I shall love them evermore)
And I look in their eyes and clasp their hands,
Beneath a vine-wreathed door,

Yonder are the wood-crowned hills,
Flaming with gold and red;
I hear the brawl of a fretting brook,
Swollen high in its rocky bed.

The orchard, the willow hedge,
The pasture with cows, and the well,
The giant hickory near the gate,
On guard, like a sentinel.

I see all these, as I stand
In the autumn's sunset glow,
And talk and listen, with throbbing heart,
To the friends I used to know.

I start—and the vision fades,
The fire is dead, and the light
Is gone from the dripping and darkened panes:
I sit alone in the night.

No Such Thing As Love.

- “There's no such thing as love.” So said
A flippant sneerer whom I met one day:—
And yet a child sat at her feet and played,
And a sweet babe upon her bosom lay.
- Greatly I wondered. “No such thing as love?
Then what are these?” Her thin lip curled.
- “These? These are incidents. Your words but prove
Your ignorance. You do not know the world.
- “You wonder why I wed?” Still curled her lip;
Still flushed her darkeye with a bitter scorn:—
- “Why, I am a woman—so obey the whip
That swings its lash above all women born.
- “It is our fate. Let one dare disobey,
The whole world shun her. Let her dare to tread
In her own right, her independent way,
Men pelt her with this word of scorn: old maid.
- “Speak common sense. Don't talk of love to me.
'Tis sickening—this stuff that poets sing.
You marry, you have filled your destiny;
But love—I tell you there is no such thing.”

Sadly I left her, sadly I went my way;
And then I met another—it was you.
Had I believed her? Well, I cannot say;
But now I know she did not tell me true.

My Stalk of Corn.

Just a single stalk of corn,
Nothing more;
Was there ever a stalk of corn
Cherished so before?

On the window, where the sun
Shines at noon,
And at eve, the tender light
Of the moon.

Half a pint or so of soil—
Hardly that,
Half enough to fill the crown
Of baby's hat.

This it has to feed its life;
This is all.
Yet I love this stalk of corn
Best of all.

Best of all my pets in green
Thou a vine,
By geraniums scented sweet,
Doth entwine.

And I pet it tenderly,
This stalk of corn—
Turn it kindly toward the pane
Every morn.

How it thanks me for its life,
How it grows!
In such thrift, its gratitude
How it shows.

Still I watch and water it,
Though I know,
The slender store of food it has
Is wasting slow.

Never shall the breezes wane
Its yellow hair:
Never tassel crown its top,
Nor golden ear.

Just so much it has to feed,
Then must die;
Who knows but that it may be so
With you or I?

We know not our stock of life,
Great or small:
But the one who keepeth us
Knoweth all.

We live on, a careless life,
Or fiercely toil.
While our only store may be
Half a pint of soil.

Let us, like this stalk of corn,
Do our best,
And to him who loveth us
Leave the rest.

The Nation's Patient.

"Out of danger," the doctors say;
The battle with Death is won.
So millions of hearts are glad to-day,
And millions of lips thank God as they pray,
At the going down of the sun.

Through terrible days of doubt and gloom,
Through nights of fear and dread,
All hearts were turned toward that silent room,
Where Destiny wrought in her pauseless loom,
By one brave sufferer's bed.

A nation's fate was the net she wove,
With shuttle stained bloody red;
And a nation waited in trembling love—
Some turn of the beam the strength should prove
Of one nigh severed thread.

It will not break! Speed the tidings forth!
Though silken, 'tis wondrous strong.
It has drawn together the South and the North—
So much to the Land one life is worth;
May that life be happy and long.

They have grieved together, they join to-day
In a glad thanksgiving hymn,
Who have met erewhile in the deadly fray—
And oh! may the fellowship live for aye,
That was born in that chamber dim.

We prize the prompt, full sympathy
Which from other lands comes in;
Our grief has waked beyond the sea,
Great throbs of that humanity
Which "makes the whole world kin."

We prize the sympathy none the less
That is flashed from every shore,
Because, with reverent thankfulness,
And with tender tears, we prize and bless
That of our brothers the more.

Then ring, ye bells! Ye organs, sound.
In anthems deep and grand!
Let joyful cannon shake the ground:
Let feasts be spread, let joy abound—
Love reigns throughout the land.

Machine Poetry.

I sit me down to make a batch of rhymes;
I've nothing in particular to say;
'Tis just to turn a crank and count the times—
Such poetry is ground out every day.

The papers teem with it, why shouldn't I
Help swell this tone that current poets sing?
'Tis neither soft and sweet, nor grand and high,
And has no meaning—just an empty ring.

I fill my hoppers with the lightest trash,
Not throwing in one grain of thought or passion.—
No bright idea, lest its sudden flash
Should startle—for ideas are out of fashion.

I talk of love, of course, but in such style
That anyone can see there's nothing in it;
I turn off love-sick stanzas while I smile,
And wonder if some fool will think I mean it.

I screech, high-keyed, in wild and mournful tones,
A wail for some one false or long departed;
I rake the past, and over dead, dry bones
Utter a dirge that sounds quite broken-hearted.

Meanwhile, but few are ever taken in
By all this stuff: most people know too well
The spurious tricks of rhyme, its crying sin:
Its make-believe, its hollow, sounding shell.

I tell my "poet's lie" without offense,
For 'tis a sort of sickly-solemn joke
That none believes in who has common sense;
It takes so little fire to make a smoke.

Long-suffering public, take my grist of chaff—
At your own price—we surely shall not quarrel.
It will not make you weep or laugh;
But then, you know, 'twill help fill up the "barrel."

A Race For Life.

Somebody must probe that hidden vein—
Somebody must clear that under-ground way
For the choked-up stream—and so the twain
Whose story I tell, went down that day.

Were they heroes? Only two working men,
With mud-stained clothes, and rough-shod feet;
But *somebody loved them*—life was, then,
Something to cling to, dear and sweet.

Overhead the beautiful sunshine lay,
Yet they toiled in darkness, save the beam
Of one dim lantern, that showed the way,
And flashed on the walls its ghostly gleam.

Far from the entrance an awful sound
Arose behind them—the horrible roar
Of the pent-up waters, just unbound,
Surging, swelling, like tides on the shore.

Quick, to the entrance! the stream sweeps on!

Fear lends them wings—a misstep, a fall;

Then pitchy darkness—the light is gone!

They must feel the way by the slimy wall.

With cold, numb hands, and careful feet,

They have threaded the passage and stand below

The vaulted entrance: here horrors meet—

The *ladder is gone* in the surge and flow!

Up to the armpits the water lies,

And now to the neck; the lips, the brow

Well go under next, as the black tides rise;

Can anything, *anything* save them now?

Something comes floating. A shout, a cry,

“The ladder! Here, comrade, make steady feet;

I hold it—you mount, and then will I—”

“Thank God! was ever daylight so sweet?”

Ever Day Work.

Great deeds are trumpeted; loud bells are rung,

And men turn round to see

The high peaks echo to the peans sung

O'er some great victory.

And yet great deeds are few. The mightiest men

Find opportunities but now and then.

Shall one sit idle through long days of peace,

Waiting for walls to scale?

Or lie in port until some “Golden Fleece”

Lures him to face the gale?

There's work enough; why idly, then, delay?

His work counts most who labors every day.

A torrent sweeps down the mountain's brow,
With foam and flash and roar.
Anon its strength is spent—where is it now?
Its one short day is o'er.
But the clear stream that through the meadow flows,
All the long summer on its mission goes.

Better the steady flow; the torrent's dash
Soon leaves its rent track dry.
The light we love is not a lightning flash
From out a midnight sky.
But the sweet sunshine, whose unfailing ray,
From its calm throne of blue lights every day.

The sweetest lives are those to duty wed—
Whose deeds both great and small,
Are close-knit strands of one unbroken thread.
Where love ennobles all.
The world may sound no trumpets, ring no bells—
The Book of Life the shining record tells.

Farmer John.

"If I'd nothing to do," said Farmer John.

"To fret or to bother me—

Were I but rid of this mountain of work.

What a good man I could be."

"The pigs get out, and the cows get in

Where they have no right to be;

And the weeds in the garden and in the corn—

Why, they fairly frighten me."

"It worries me out of temper quite.

And well nigh out of my head.

What a curse it is that a man must toil

Like this for his daily bread."

But Farmer John broke his leg,
And was kept for many a week
A helpless and an idle man:—
Was he therefore mild and meek?

Nay: what with the pain, and what with the fret
Of sitting with nothing to do—
And the farm work blotched by a shiftless hand,
He got very cross and blue.

He scolded the children and cuffed the dog
That fawned about his knee;
And snarled at his wife, though she was kind
And patient as a wife could be.

He grumbled and whined and fretted and fumed,
The whole long day through.
"Twill ruin me quite," cried Farmer John,
"To sit here with nothing to do!"

But the time wore on, and he thoughtful grew,
As he watched his patient wife,
And he vowed one morn with a tear in his eye,
He would lead a different life.

His hurt got well, and he went to work;
And a busier man than he,
A happier man, or a pleasanter man,
You never would wish to see.

The pigs got out, and he drove them back,
Whistling right merrily;
He mended the fence, and kept the cows
Just where they ought to be.

Weeding the garden was jolly fun,
And ditto hoeing the corn.
"I'm happier far," said Farmer John,
"Than I have been since I was born."

He learned a lesson that lasted him well;—
 'Twill last him his whole life through.
He frets but seldom, and never because
 He has plenty of work to do.

“ I tell you what,” says Farmer John,
 “ They are either knaves or fools
Who long to be idle, for idle hands
 Are the Devil's chosen tools!”

Labor.

Welcome, life's toil! I thank the gracious Giver
 Who find my heart and hands their work to do:
That labor done still multiplies forever,
 And each swift hour and moment claims its due.

I pity him who sits him down repining,
 Bound in his idleness—a silken thong;
He hates the sun and wearies of its shining;
 His moments creep—for empty days are long.

My days are full, I have no far off “mission:”
 My work is near; 'tis only mine to stand
Accepting tasks that spring from my condition—
 Doing, as best I may, the work at hand.

It may be small: yet, drop by drop is added
 To make the gentle flow, the steady stream:
The smallest needle, if 'tis often threaded
 By patient hand, may sew the longest seam.

The finest strands may twist into a cable;
 Small stones be piled till looms a pyramid,
Slow, patient thought may break the crust of fable,
 Beneath which golden mines of truth be hid.

I cannot always see my cable growing;
Nor always see my pile of stones increase;
Yet, while I toil— the still years swiftly going—
This fruit of labor bears; it bringeth peace.

The Wild-Rose.

Peeping from out the hedges,
Bending above the brim
Of the stream that threads the meadows,
Fringing the forest dim.

Stealing into my garden
Waiting not my call;
Scaling the ancient gateway,
Creeping under the wall.

Climbing the mossed enclosure
Yonder, where willows wave,
Nestling against the tombstone,
Clustered on every grave.

Christened by name, yet blooming
Silently everywhere;
Asking for naught' yet giving,
Lavish as summer air,

I *love* thee, rose of the hedges,
Rose of the streamlet's rim;
Meek adorning of tombstones,
Prince of the forest dim.

To Mrs. C. H. Phillips.

Brave woman, treading with unfaltering feet,
A path of sorrow, wet with many a tear,
Sustaining, with a courage rare and sweet,
Your heavy weight of grief, so hard to bear;

A sister greets you. Could my lips but speak
In language sweet and tender, strong and true,
All the full sympathies that utterance seek,
Some crumb of comfort it might bring to you.

I know you well. I mark your sunny face,
Your bright and kindly smile, your cheerful tone;
Yet, hidden close within its sacred place,
I know that patient grief still holds its throne.

All that your friends can give you gladly take;
You bid them welcome to your lovely home;
And yet your heart still holds its weary ache,
Its darkened chambers where no friend can come.

The lonely night, with dreams of pleasure past,
The waking but to feel they are no more;
The long, long days (they once did fly so fast!)
The sense of dreary loss, the longing sore.

I know all these; and yet I know that Time—
Time, the dread spoiler—hath a touch of healing:
O'er cherished graves snow falls, and winter rime
Cool grasses creep, and moss comes softly stealing.

Earth hath a tender clasp. In slumber deep
Folds she our dear ones to her peaceful breast.
For them all trial ends; so, let us weep
Few bitter tears o'er their untroubled rest.

No need that we forget; let grief pass by,
While we live o'er the tender precious hours,
The touch, the kiss—so dear to memory.
These are our own—sweet, never-fading flowers.

Sad are our partings, dark the night of sorrow,
Yet blest are we, if hope descry the dawn;
If faith reach forward to a sweet to-morrow,
Whose joys await us when the night is gone.

Peace After War.

Rest for the dead. No more, for marches dreary,
They stretch their stiffened limbs when bugles sound;
No more at night they lie down, wet and weary,
Upon the sodden ground.

No more the gallant charge, amid the screaming
Of murderous iron ball and bursting shell,
Up steep and slippery slopes—with warm blood streaming—
“Into the mouth of hell.”

No more the dreadful search, the battle over,
While up the placid sky the white moon climbs;
No more the mournful truce, while both sides cover
Torn breasts and shattered limbs.

Not truce to-day, but peace. Soft grass is creeping,
Year after year, above the broken sod,
Where gallant foemen—foes no more—are sleeping,
Blossoms the golden rod.

Where passed the armies, when the shock of meeting,
Deep fissures were, and fields all tramped and torn,
Now happy birds, the same old song repeating,
Flit through the growing corn.

Thus Nature speaks to all, with mute appealing,
Wrapping in tender green each gaping scar,
Shall man alone resist her touch of healing,
And still remain at war?

No, no. If any lurking hate yet lingers
In any heart, oh fling it far away!
While fragrant flowers are strewn by loving fingers
Above both blue and gray.

Tragedy and Farce.

Sweetly the summer-sun is shining
Out from the dome of the sapphire sky;
Green are the pastures, the wheat-fields golden;
Calmly the river goes rolling by.

Peace at the center and on the border—
Hum of industry everywhere—
Teams afield—the clatter of reapers—
Songs of harvesters on the air.

Blithe are the sounds of the summer-morning;
But stay—the songs cease suddenly;
The lift of a hand—the crack of a pistol—
And cheeks turn pallid from sea to sea.

A dim, hushed room—a sick man lying
Fainting with weakness, racked with pain;
Rosy bulletins, morning and evening,
Raising our hopes to be dashed again;

Week after week of weary waiting;
Trembling millions on bended knee;
Later, a still form, pallid, pulseless,
There in the cottage by the sea.

Thus it is ended—the long, slow torture;
 Ended our hopes, our doubts, our fears.
Towns and cities are draped in sable —
 A mighty nation sits drowned in tears.

* * * * *

Crowded court-room, Judge and jury:
 Ghastly farce, where the high and low,
Master and servant, maid and mistress,
 Come together to see the show.

Blood-stained wretch, as leading actor,
 Blusters and rants in his brutal way;
Browbeats witnesses and lawyers,
 Just as he wills it to run the play,

Beautiful ladies, plumed and jeweled
 (They wept for his victim), calmly sit,
Soft cheeks dimpling with covert laughter:
 Judges smile at his insolent wit.

How long, how long, shall these scenes continue,
 While the whole world looks on in scorn?
How many pages must stain our annals,
 For children to blush at, yet unborn.

Sadly we watched o'er a good man dying,
 And shed our tears o'er the murdered dead:
With cheeks scarce dry, shall we speak no protest
 While the murderer stars it where he bled?

For very shame, cut short, O Justice!
 Drop the curtain! put out the light!
Through all the land we are weary—wearied:
 Hide this monster away from sight!

If I were You.

Would you have your name to echo,
Generations through?
I would make it worth repeating
If I were you.

Do you wish to win disciples?
Reason and then no,
I would follow my own preaching
If I were you.

Do you blow a public trumpet?
Let its tone be true.
I would never pitch it falsely
If I were you.

Would you fill a post of honor?
Earn it ere you sue.
I would merit ere I begged it
If I were you.

Are you set to serve your country?
To your trust be true.
I'd not steal my master's silver
If I were you.

Are you fickle—prone to changing
Old friends for the new?
I would keep the old and tried ones
If I were you.

Have you won a loving woman?
To your love be true.
I'd not win a heart to break it
If I were you.



The last night of the year,
I sat alone
Beside the dying fire.

Would you leave a written record
Clear as heaven's blue?
I would keep each page unspotted
If I were you.

Do you preach a day when judgement
Gives each man his due?
I would be what I pretended
If I were you.

The Last Hour of the Year.

I sit me down to watch with thee, Old Year,
E'en to thy last throe, for I have loved thee well;
And fain would at thy parting drop my tear,
Though I may chant no requiem, toll no bell.

In thy soft spring time, in the summer glory,
And when in autumn days each wooded hill
Stood crowned with flame. I've loved thee—old and hoary;
With thy last moment's going, I love thee still!

Yes, I will watch with thee, while silence deep
Reigns all around me, only tick by tick
The clock tells off the seconds, and the sweep
Of this last hour is told by each low click.

I trim my midnight lamp, and sit and think.
One questions Conscience at a deathbed, so here
I question mine, and ravel link by link,
My chain of words and deeds, that spans the year.

Would it were woven better! but in vain
Are all regrets unless one gird the life,
Amid the sackcloth of repentant pain,
With strength to conquer in a braver strife?

But while I cast a sober, backward eye,
Above my low-bowed head the clock ticks on;
One moment only! swiftly, silently,
This one moment goes—and now 'tis gone.

Twelve ringing, thrilling strokes! and now, I know,
The chimes peal out from many a midnight bell;
Here but the night wind sighs above the snow,
I've watched with thee—thou diest—so farewell!

Thanksgiving Night.

Blow and blow, November storm,
Frost my windows, beat at my door!
But you cannot come to my fireside warm,
Where I sit and hark to your gusty roar.

You beard the trees with your frosty breath;
You grasp the stream in your icy hand,
And the sleeping lake lies still as death,
Waveless, mute, by the frozen land.

The leaves scarce fallen, the birds scarce flown,
You grasp full soon with your pitiless hold
Upon sod and stream, upon field and town—
Hasty and fierce is your griping cold.

I pity the poor in your hand, to-night—
In shaking garrets, in cellars damp,
Shrinking, shivering, thin and white!
Death is abroad on his stealthy tramp!

Yet this wild night is Thanksgiving night,
And some give thanks, some feast and play;
Some shiver and freeze, while soft and bright
The festal lamps shine over the way.

O, ye who feast in happy homes,
Thankful for much, expecting more,
While joy along with thanksgiving comes—
To-night, to-night remember the poor!

Our Chart.

From day to day we float upon a sea,
Now softly rippling to a summer wind,
Now plowed by gales and tossing stormily,
With rocks before and gulfling waves behind,
And sails all torn and flapping uselessly.

But whether on the ever-changing sea
Sweet summer sheds its calm or winter wails:
Whether in safe, still harbors we may be,
Or driven onward by relentless gales,
Or close by battling crags creep cautiously—

We have a chart to guide us on through all!
Past treacherous quicksands—past the breakers' roar—
Past rocky capes, where storms forever fall,
Through narrow passes, where rocks huge and hoar,
Lock out the sunlight with a frowning wall.

Our guide to safety and an open sea,
Where any winds shall wrangle nevermore—
If we but heed its reckonings carefully—
The sea without a storm, without a shore:
A calm and peaceful deep—Eternity!

To Mr. and Mrs. John Young.

We give you heartfelt greeting,—you two, who hand in
hand

Have toiled up stony places, and now together stand
Surrounded by the plenty and the fatness of the land.

You have helped to build the country, as early pioneers;
You have shared each other's pleasures, you have wept each
other's tears;
And have cut your loaf together—for five and twenty years.

You have shared your toil and trouble, with willing hearts
and true:

You have bravely pulled together—and a load, to me or you,
Is only half as heavy for being borne by two.

All praise to honest labor! and to the patient skill
That has helped you over ditches, and so far up the hill;—
To the cheerful perseverance that keeps you climbing still.

You have had your days of sadness, of shadows dark and
deep;

You have grown footsore and heavy when the way was hard
and steep;

And sometimes, over weary, have sat you down to weep.

You have had your bitter losses—stretching hands in vain
to save;

You have seen your blossoms dropping, each to a tiny grave,
Where the winter drifts lie heavy, where the summer
grasses wave.

But your arms are not left empty; one hears, from out the
street,

The sound of children's voices, the fall of little feet;
And sees, beside you standing, young daughters fair and
sweet.

So blessings cover losses, so kindly old hurts heal.
'Tis well for all that sorrow gives place to pleasant weal,
That we need not feel forever the prick of cruel steel.

Sufficient each day's evil—sufficient to alloy,
With its dash of pungent bitter, the sweet of passing joy.
Then let us not reach backward for something to annoy.

So here's a merry greeting. We wake no silent knells,
No stir the choking damp in your dark and sunken wells.
We come as friends and neighbors, to ring your wedding
bells.

We come with best good wishes—for this my song is sung—
With friendship in each hand-clasp, good will on every
tongue,
Long may you live and prosper—may you be always *Young*.

May you see increasing fullness in basket and in store;
May you barns with bursting plenty be full and running o'er;
May your roots strike deep and deeper, like the poplar at
your door.

May Time steal gentle marches, and touch you tenderly:
May you clasp your children's children, and may you live to
see
The day of your golden wedding—and won't you please ask
me?

Mrs. Hattie Tyng Griswold.

I cast me not down to worship—
She is human as well as I;
And the same sun lights the valleys
That kisses the hill-tops high.

No words of wild adulation
Have I for the pet of fame;
She hath no need of incense
Such as goeth up to a *name*.

But something lovelier, dearer,
Than crowds ever rise and crown,
Calleth on me for telling —
Calleth the sweet tears down.

I have seen her—the *wife* and *mother*—
Little feet all about her played,
And the babes that slept in the twilight
Rollicking music made.

I know not why, but it touched me,
And quickened my pulse's beat—
I had found the poet a *woman*,
Tender and true and sweet.

Two Christmas Guests.

'Tis Christmas eve. All silent lies the prairie brown and
sere,
And amid the voiceless shadows the midnight hours draw
near.

As I sit here musing, dreaming, and turning memory's
leaves,
'There pass in long procession, so many Christmas eves!

And one, of all the many, to-night stands out alone
In its joy and its tender sorrow, with a pathos all its own.

There were feasting and rejoicing, and the village streets
were gay,
But the lights burned low and dimly in the house across
the way.

Full well I knew the inmates—the household numbered
three—
A husband, a dear old father, and a young wife fair to see.

Kindly they dwelt together, 'twas said none ever heard
In that house a tone of anger, nor any unkind word.

But Life and Death together that night had crossed the sill:
The good old man lay dying, and the fair young wife was ill.

Without the merry sleighbells rang up and down the street,
Within, were low-hushed voices, and the tread of noiseless
feet.

A sound arose at midnight—the first cry of a child.
The dying grandsire heard it, looked up, and faintly smiled.

A son is born? I thank thee, O Father, for thy grace.
I go, but this one cometh, and he shall take my place.

I pray you bring him hither—go, bring the boy to me,
I fain would once behold him, while yet these eyes can see.

The babe was brought, and smiling, the old man softly said,
As he laid his pallid fingers on the tiny baby head:

I have no wealth to leave him, in houses or in lands,—
For e'en as I came hither, I go with empty hands:

But tell him for his grandsire—tell him as child and youth—
To be loyal, kind and loving, and *always speak the truth*.

But little more was spoken, a solemn silence fell,
Save but the sound of weeping, and the whisper, "All is
well."

When Christmas morn rose brightly from out the shadows
gray,
A strip of crape was floating from the door across the way.

Amid the still night watches, thus calmly, peacefully,
Had the good old man departed—yet the household num-
bered three.

Though Life and Death come surely into the homes of men,
They come not oft together, and so peacefully as then.

And that is why, in my musings, that night stands out
alone,
In its joy and its tender sorrow, with a pathos all its own.

The Last Hour.

Only another hour. The night creeps by
The same as other nights. No dying moans
Disturb the darkness: only mournfully
The winter rain drips slowly o'er the stones.

The whole house sleeps, I only watch and wait,
Through the last hour of the hoary year,
To con the last line of this leaf of fate,—
This record, blotched and blurred by many a tear.

The leaf shall turn at midnight; nevermore
Shall human deed or passion mark its face.
And none may change it, though repenting sore,
We write at will—ah, would we might erase!

Come, good resolves. This hour is left to make
Strong promises to cast out every sin,
And solemn vows great things to undertake;—
But there's the year ahead to break them in.

We all are weak; yet, counting on our strength,
We lay our plans like Titans,—we, so small!
We seek to execute, and find at length,
We do but pigmies' work—or none at all.

Well, be it so. Better to strive in vain
Than to sit idle; better that we fall
In hidden pitfalls, time and time again,
Than cling like cowards to some sheltering wall.

The years grow shorter; youth slips fast away;
I see upon my brow the prints of care;
My step is growing sober, and to-day
I plucked some threads of silver from my hair.

We all are growing old—like time. 'Tis well
If we gain wisdom as our locks turn gray.
No room for pride; only a slab shall tell—
And that shall crumble—of our little day.

The o'clock strike. So the old year dies,
And so the new is born. I list in vain
For sound or speech—for groans or natal cries;
I hear only the dripping of the rain.

Who Knows?

Philosophy assumes to tell
How happened this, how happened that;
Reasons of sequence passing well,
By process none may cavil at.

If this be true, then that must be;
And so on, which seems very plain:
But what rules human destiny
We ask and cannot ascertain.

The deeds we do, the words we say,
May serve our purpose, or may not;
Some soul may be a wreck to-day
Through some slight word, long since forgot.

"Mistakes," says Science; yet the wise,
Whose far gaze tracks the rolling spheres,
Grope blindly through life's mysteries,
And weep, with others, human tears.

Philosophy cannot forecast
The workings of one human breast:
Nor trace the springs of actions past:
Life is a riddle at the best.

We plan what we shall be and do,
While bars of fate around us close.
That strain or stroke may not break through:
We plan and purpose, but—who knows?

The Storm.

A summer day. A bank of cloud,
Low in the far northwest,
Which, dim and hazy, sullen browed,
It hides as yet, with misty shroud,
The passion in its breast.

The lazy hours slowly creep;
All breathless is the noon;
And still in solemn, stately sweep,
Uprolls the cloud, with growlings deep
"The storm is coming soon."

Another hour. Thick darkness falls,
And rosy cheeks grow pale,
The fearful roar all hearts appalls,
And green are those advancing walls,
Warning of wind and hail.

Louder, yet louder; crash and roar,
And blinding sheets of fire—
While forks and chains go streaking o'er
That livid green; which, more and more,
Bodeeth of tempest dire.

The awful storm bursts forth at last,
In wind, and hail and rain.
Like jagged stones from cannon cast,
The blocks of ice come crashing fast
Through many a shivered pane.

The jagged ice, the flood that pours,
The flash, and roar, and hiss;
The flying glass, the rattling doors,
The dripping walls, the streaming floors—
A fearful scene is this!

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At last the storm is spent and o'er;
The cloud has rolled away.
At shattered window, battered door,
We stand and look abroad once more,
With faces of dismay.

The teeming earth that smiled at morn,
Her fair face fresh from sleep;
Now lies with garments frayed and torn,
Here strewn with wrecks the floods have borne,
There furrowed wide and deep.

Through leafless trees an hour ago
Fruit-laden, glossy green:
The damp wind passes, sighing low;
The fruit lies heaped like winter snow,
With dead birds wedged between.

Gardens, with flowers rich and rare,
Of leaf and stalk are reft,
As if some giant, passing there,
Had wielded broom and swept them bare,
And ne'er a green thing left.

The saddest yet is still untold,
For, more than all, we mourn—
More than bare trees or flowers of gold,
Of green fruit crushed in sodden mould—
The ruined fields of corn.

At noon in solid ranks they stood,
With plumes and pennons gay:
All close and thick as jungle wood,
Each great ear wrapped in bright green hood,
A brave and rich array.

But now, Oh now! the plumes are shorn;
The bruised stalks leafless stand,

The massive ears with hoods all torn,
Hang drooping, battered and forlorn,
Or strew the sodden land.

When Days Grow Dark.

The world grows dim, so far I see your face,
Your dear, kind face, so often bent on me
In tender pity, and I fondly trace
The well known features while I yet can see,
Ere fades such twilight as is left me yet,
Lest in the coming darkness I forget.

Forget! Oh, no, not that! Although I may
Forget the roundness of the robin's breast,
The spreading crimson of the new born day,
Or sunset gold upon the mountain's crest,
Your face shall clinging memory hold fast
And never older than I see it last.

I read no more: above the tempting book
Gathers a mist impalpable and pale,
Baffling, relentless: wheresoe'er I look,
The page is hidden by a filmy veil.
Alas! I cry with slow and bitter tears,
Must it be thus through all the coming years?

You take the book and pour into my ear
In accents sweet the words I cannot see:
I listen, charmed, forget my haunting fear
And think with you as with your eyes I see.
In the world's thought, so your dear voice be left,
I still have part, I am not all bereft.

And if this darkness deepens, when for me
The new moon bends no more her silver rim,
When stars go out and over land and sea
Black midnight falls where now is twilight dim,
Oh, then may I be patient, sweet and mild,
While your hand leads me like a little child.

How Two Knights Rode to London.

All ye who press and hurry along life's stony way,
Spurred onward by ambition that rests not, night or day;
Come, listen to a legend in plain and homely rhyme,
All of two gallant horsemen, two knights of olden time.

These knights had pledged each other above the flowing
bowl,
To ride a race to-morrow, with London for the goal.
So they met at early morn, and both were brave to view:
One bore a scarlet banner and one a flag of blue.

One fiercely spurred his charger and madly tore away,
Waving his scarlet banner to meet the rising day:
And ere the dews of morning were drunk up by the sun,
He gaily sang, "The wager is just as good as won."

But the knight who wore the blue took such an easy pace,
You never would have dreamed he was riding for a race,
With banner softly floating, he sang, "To win at last
In a long and weary contest, one must not ride too fast."

Still tore away the other, on hill and sunny plain;
Wild flew the scarlet banner, back streamed the charger's
mane,
His breath came quick and hot, there was foam on flank
and breast;
Yet the fierce and fiery rider gave not a moment's rest.

The day grew hot and hotter, the summer sun rode high:
Noon came; there stood an inn, but the fierce knight passed
it by.
Still onward—but the charger was faint and weary grown;
His splendid head was drooping, his strength was spent
and gone,

The spurs were buried deeper, blood mingled with the foam,
But spur and whip were bootless—the beast was over come.
He turned a sad eye backward, with plaintive, piteous
moan,

Yet his master steeled to pity, still sought to spur him on.

But lo! the angry horseman heard hoof-beats close abreast,
’Twas a brave and gallant charger refreshed by food and
rest.

A blue flag gaily floating, just brushed against his cheek;
But not a word he uttered—he was too wroth to speak.

Away sped horse and rider, and ere the sun went down
They swept into a court yard of mighty London town.
But the evening fogs hung brooding o’er the city’s lessened
din.

When a steed all spent and halting came faintly stagger-
ing in.

Limp hung the scarlet banner, all trailing dismally:
Oh! that jaded horse and rider were a sorry sight to see!
Not once for rest had paused he—that fierce and fiery
knight—

And now was lost his wager and his steed was ruined quite.

Thus ends the ancient tale with its moral clear and strong,
And the moral, not the tale, is the burden of my song.
It is but this: He loses who presses on too fast,
And patient moderation is winner at the last.

The rougher are the steeps and the longer is the road,
More fatal to success are impatient spur and goad.
Great things are works of time—for true growth must have
its way;

No structure that remaineth was builded in a day.

That pale, misguided youth who burns the midnight oil,
Gains little in reward for his tense and wearying toil.

Save features pinched and hollow, locks prematurely white,
Save broken health and spirits, save dimmed and failing
sight.

Along life's rugged hillside lies many a shattered hope,
Wrecked in the fiery struggle up the steep and stony slope.
And oh! the pain of weeping above a broken life!
Oh! the agony of falling, defeated in the strife!

To rest as well as labor, God made both brawn and brain,
And strongest brain and muscle endure not ceaseless strain,
Let once the strings be broken, the loss is great indeed—
Work, then, but labor wisely—and thine be labor's meed.

Spring.

Oh, Spring is coming, coming, treading softly on the snow,
And the drifts are slowly melting with the pressure and
the glow,
There's a waking and a thrilling in the heart with life
aglow
That has throbbed through all the winter, underneath the
frozen snow.

Let others sing of summer, with its wavy, grassy seas.
Or of glorious, gorgeous autumn, with her crimson, flaming
trees,
Or of hoary bearded winter, with its days of glassy calm,
But I will sing the springtime with its tenderness and balm.

I stretch my arms to greet her, and my lips return her kiss,
I accept the joy she offers and I drink her cup of bliss.
Oh, my heart is throbbing, thrilling with a joy I cannot
tell,
As I wave my hand to winter in a jubilant farewell.

A Dedicatory Hymn.

Written by request, and sung at the dedication of the Baptist Church in Horton.

Though highest heaven is thy throne,
And earth and suns and stars thine own,
Yet to thy feet, our Lord and King,
Our choicest gifts we gladly bring.

Wilt thou accept, we humbly pray,
The offering we bring to-day:
For thee this house our hands have made;
In love are its foundations laid.

May nothing sordid enter here;
No strife provoke the sinner's sneer.
With concert sweet and worship pure,
May peace remain and love endure.

As sunshine falls, and dews of night,
May blessings on these walls alight.
May all who here shall bow the knee
With contrite hearts, find rest in thee.

May souls afflicted, tempest-tossed,
By floods o'erwhelmed in darkness lost,
Find here a light for 'wildered feet,
For sorest trouble comfort sweet.

We all as leaves must fade away,—
This house shall crumble and decay;—
But yonder—yonder stands
A better house not made with hands.

Struggle.

Great strength is brought with pain,
From out the strife,
From out the storms that sweep
The human soul—
Those hidden tempests
Of the inner life—
Comes forth the lofty calm
Of self-control.

Peace after war. Although
The heart may be trampled
And plowed like a torn battle field,
Rich are the fruits that follow victory,
And the battle grounds
The fullest harvests yield.

Strong grows his arm who breasts
A downward stream,
And stems with steady stroke
The mighty tide
Of his own passions. Sore
The wrench may seem,
But only he is strong
Whose strength is tried.

To toil is hard, to lay
Aside the oar,
To softly rise and fall
With passion's swell.
Is easier far. But when
The dream is o'er
The bitterness of waking
None can tell.

To float at ease, by sleepy
Zephyrs fanned,
Is but to grow more feeble
Day by day:
While slips life's little hour
Out, sand by sand,
And strength and hope together
Waste away.

He only wins who sets
His thews of steele
With tighter tensions for
The prick of pain;
Who wearies, yet stands fast:
Whose patient zeal
Welcomes the present loss
For future gain.

Toil before ease: the cross
Before the crown.
Who covets rest, he first
Must earn the boom.
He who at night in peace
Would lay him down,
Must bear his load amid
The heats of noon.

On the Farm.

How sweet to lean on Nature's arm,
And jog through life upon the farm!
Merchants and brokers spread and dash
A little while, then go to smash;
But we can keep from day to day,
The even tenor of our way.
(There go those horses! Quick, John! catch 'em!
They'll break their necks! You didn't hitch 'em!)

How clear and shrill the ploughboy's song,
As merrily he jogs along!
The playful breeze about him whirls,
And tosses wide his yellow curls.
His hands are brown, his cheeks are red—
An ever blooming flower bed.
Unspoiled by crowds, unvexed by care—
(Goodness, do hear the urchin swear!)

How soft the summer showers fall
On field and garden, cheering all;
How bright, in woods, the diamond sheen
Of rain-drops strung on threads of green—
Each oak a King, with jewelled crown.
(The wind has blown the haystack down!
I knew 'twould hail, it got so warm.
That fence is flat—my! what a storm!

How soft the hazy summer night!
On dewy grass the moon's pale light
Rests dreamily. It falls in town,
On smoky roofs and pavements brown.
How tenderly, when night is gone,
Breaks o'er the fields the summer dawn!
How sweet and pure the scented morn—
(Get up! Old Molly's in the corn!)

Far from the city's dust and broil,
We women sing at household toil,
Nor scorn to work with hardened hands.
We laugh at fashion's bars and bands,
And on our cheeks wear Nature's rose—
(That calf is nibbling at my clothes!
Off she goes at double shuffle,
Chewing down my finest ruffle!)

We workers, in our loom of life,
Far from the city's din and strife,

Weave many a soft, poetic rose,
With patient hand, through warp of prose.
We love our labor more and more,
(John! here! these pigs are at the door!
They've burst the sty, and scaled the wall—
There goes my kettle, soap and all!)

Pity Her.

No sleep, no rest! the night drags slowly by:
The peaceful moonbeams fall athwart the floor;
The cool wind steals in softly, and the sky
Curtains soft sleep, but she—she sleeps no more!

She sleeps no more. A tossing sea of pain
Lashed into madness, rolls its swollen tide
Like red-hot lava, through her heart and brain;
And at her feet a dark gulf opens wide.

O sisters pity! Other, lower deeps
Yawn to engulf her— will ye thrust her down
Into their seething depths? Look how she weeps,
And will ye drive her mad with your cold frown?

O woman, take thy foot from off her neck!
Uncurl thy lip of scorn! Drop but one tear
Of sweet compassion for the mournful wreck
Of the youth and loveliness that crouches here!

Knew ye what writhing serpents of remorse
Twist their sharp fangs amid her tangled hair—
Knew ye her agony beneath the curse
That rests on her young head, so hard to bear—

Ye could not to the tempter turn and smile;
And with a cruel foot the tempted spurn!
Ye could not kiss the hand that struck, the while
Ye scathe the victim with your heartless scorn!

Once, long ago, in a self-righteous crowd,
Far backward, many a long-lapsed century,
Stood One who pitied and forgave—ye, proud
In untired strength, are ye more pure than He?

Day by Day.

Thou askest what may my mission be,
And what great work am I bound to do;
Alas! I cannot unfold to thee
The work of a day till that day be through.

I know not at night what awaits at morn:
I know not at morn what the noon shall bring;
Nor know, till the eve its fruit has borne,
What the twilight folds in its dusky wing.

I purpose and plan, but cannot dispose;
The work I would do slips through my hands;
I am given a task that I never chose:
And my strength is fettered by bars and bands.

I purpose and plan, yet blindly go,
Doubtful whither; to reach my end
I sturdily toil, yet well I know
To the will of events my will must bend.

I would build me a tower, with lordly walls,
On a lofty rock that o'ertops the lands;
But, ere it is finished, my structure falls,
For the rock has crumbled to shifting sands.

I have woven a web with the toil of years;
I have laid it by, forgetting the moth:
And I thread my needle and sharpen my shears;
But lo! the worms have eaten the cloth.

Still I then do naught; shall I sit in sloth,
Because has tumbled my lordly tower?
And because the worms have eaten my cloth—
Scorning the calls of the present hour?

If, day by day, while keen desire
Pants for the work that is great and grand,
Some small, sweet task by the household-fire
Mutely appeals to my brain and hand,

Shall I then complain? Shall I turn away,
Closing my heart to the tender call?
And leave undone the work of to-day,
Because it is humble, unseen, and small?

Nay: for, better than sounding name,
And better than riches, that rot and rust,
And better than glistening wreathes of fame,
That wither, and crumble, and fall to dust,

Are the blessings that come to me, one by one,
The peaceful joys that enter my gate.
If I do my duty from sun to sun,
Be it lowly or high, be it small or great.

The sweet, glad smile in a loved one's eye,
The tender cadence of household-tones,
Are better than crowns of the great and high;—
For to live on pride is to feed on stones.

September.

'Tis autumn in our northern land.
The summer walks a queen no more;
Her sceptre drops from out her hand;
Her strength is spent, her passion o'er.
On lake and stream, on field and town,
The placid sun smiles calmly down.

The teeming earth its fruit has borne;
The grain fields lie all shorn and bare;
And where the serried ranks of corn
Wave proudly in the summer air,
And bravely tossed their yellow locks.
Now thickly stands the bristling shocks.

On sunny slope, on crannied wall
The grapes hang purpling in the sun:
Down to the turf the brown nuts fall,
And golden apples, one by one.
Our bins run o'er with ample store —
Thus autumn reaps what summer bore.

The mill turns by the waterfall;
The loaded wagons go and come;
All day I hear the teamster's call,
All day I hear the thresher's hum;
And many a shout and many a laugh
Comes breaking through the clouds of chaff.

Gay, careless sounds of homely toil!
With mirth and labor closely bent
The weary tiller of the soil
Wins seldom wealth, but oft content.
'Tis better still if he but knows
What sweet, wild beauty round him glows.

The brook glides toward the sleeping lake—
Now babbling over shining stones;
Now under clumps of bush and brake,
Hushing its brawl to murmuring tones;
And now it takes its winding path
Through meadows green with aftermath.

The frosty twilight early falls,
But household fires burn warm and red.
The cold may creep without the walls,
And growing things lie stark and dead—
No matter, so the hearth be bright
When household faces meet to-night.

Probably Not.

My ships may come in from the sea,
Laden with wealth untold,
And bringing it all to me—
Spices, and pearls, and gold,
 In many a rich ingot—
 But—probably not.

The castles I build in Spain,
That a breath so topples o'er,
And which daily I rear again,
May stand, and fall no more—
 By destroying winds forgot—
 But—probably not.

I may find the shackles of care
That fetter my aching wing,
While I long to cleave the air,
And wildly to soar and sing,
 Lifted from off my lot—
 But—probably not.

The heights to which I aspire—
I may reach them by and by;
And that which I most desire—
I may clasp it before I die,
 With the longing and pain forgot—
 But—probably not.

I may find on life's battle field,
Ere the going down of the sun,
A place to lay down my shield,
With the struggle over and done—
 Some peaceful and sheltered spot—
 But—probably not.

I may find how, without loss,
I can lay my burdens down;
Some way to elude the cross,
And yet to deserve the crown
 Which falls to the conqueror's lot—
 But—probably not.

Spinning Tow.

A little maiden with braided hair
Walks to and fro
Before a wheel. What does she there?
The child is spinning tow.

In through the open window comes
The scented breeze;
With drowsy wing the wild bee hums
Out in the orchard trees.

The blue sky bends, the flowers are sweet,
As children know;
Yet with deft hands and steady feet,
This child keeps spinning tow,

Still works she; steady mounts the sun
Through the skies of May,—
The small task ends; the skein is spun;
The girl bounds out to play.

She learns life's lesson young you say?
'Tis better so.
That life is toil as well as play,
She learns here spinning tow.

Years pass. Beside her own hearthstone
A woman stands
With steady eye and cheerful tone,
Brave heart and willing hands.

This matron, who on household ways
Glides to and fro,
Learned when a child, on soft spring days,
Life's lesson, spinning tow.

A Summer Night.

The twilight ends; the last faint crimson stain
Has faded from the west; the deep blue sky
Deeper and darker grows; and once again
God's lamps are lighted in the dome on high.
Above yon oak-crowned hill, whose trailing clouds
Hung low and slack at noon,
Now, round and red, from out their torn white shrouds,
Steps forth the harvest moon.

Thus she came forth last night; thus will she come,
The next night and the next. Oh, magic time!
The full moon wanes not at the harvest home.
And night's grand poem flows in even rhyme.
The grain is gathered; hills of tawny gold
Begem the earth's shorn breast.
Hard hands are folded; summer's tale is told;
The sickle lies in rest.

The night has wondrous voices. At my door,
I sit and listen to its many tones.
The wind comes through the woods with muffled roar,
The brook goes rippling on its bedded stones.
I hear the raccoons call among the corn,
The night-hawk's lonely cry;
A dismal owl sends out his note forlorn.
One whip-po-will sings nigh.

And there are other voices: all the grass
Is peopled with a crowd of tiny things,
We see them not, yet crush them as we pass:
These sing all night, and clap their puny wings.
Beneath my very feet, calls clear and strong,
A cricket, slyly hid;
While at my elbow—well I know his song—
Rattles a katydid.

Poor, puny things! your gala nears its end—
There comes a hint of Autumn in the wind
That bends the tassled corn; the night grows chill;
Short, and yet shorter, grows each passing day;
The year is waxing old.
The frost waits in the north, not far away:—
The summer's tale is told.

Knitting.

An old-time kitchen, an open door,
Sunshine lying across the floor;
A little maid, feet bare and brown,
Cheeks like roses, a cotton gown,
Rippling masses of shining hair,
And a childish forehead smooth and fair.

The child is knitting. The open door
Woos her, tempts her, more and more.
The sky is cloudless, the air is sweet
And sadly restless the bare brown feet.
Still, as she wishes her task were done,
She counts the rounds off, one by one.

Higher yet mounts the sun of June;
But one round more!—a joyous tune
Ripples out from the childish lips,
While swift and swifter the finger-tips
Play out and in, till I hear her say,
“Twenty rounds! I'm going to play!”

Up to the hedge where the sweet-brier blows,
Down to the bank where the brooklet flows,
Chasing the butterflies, watching the bees,
Wading in clover up to her knees,
Mocking the bobolinks; oh, what fun
It is to be free when the task is done!

Years and years have glided away.
The child is a woman, and threads of gray
One by one creep into her hair,
And I see the prints of the feet of care.
Yet I like to watch her. To-night she sits
By her household fire, and as then she knits.

Swiftly the needles glance, and the thread
Glides through her fingers, white and red.
'Tis a baby's stocking. To and fro
And out and in as the needles go,
She sings as she sang that day in June,
But the low, soft strain is a nursery tune.

Closely beside her the baby lies,
Slowly closing his sleepy eyes.
Forward, backward, the cradle swings,
Touched by her foot as she softly sings.
And now in silence her watch she keeps;
The song is hushed, for the baby sleeps.

Up from the green, through the twilight gray,
Comes the shouts of a troop at play.
Blue eyes, black eyes, golden curls -
These are all hers— her boys and girls.
Then wonder not at the prints of care,
Or the silver threads in her braided hair.

Does she ever pine for the meadow brook,
The sweet-brier hedge, the clover nook?
When sweet winds woo, when smiles the sun,
Does she ever wish that her task was done?
Would you know? Then watch her where she sits
Smiling dreamily, while she knits.

Old Letters.

Maiden at her window sitting,
With her long forgotten knitting
Lying idle when it fell upon the floor;
She is thinking, she is dreaming,
And her eyes with tears are streaming,
As she reads a pile of letters o'er and o'er.

Every sheet is closely written,
And each page illumed, love litten,
Breathing passion, hope and air of noble deeds:
Every line is manly, tender,
Wherefore then these sobs that rend her?
Why these bitter tears that blind her as she reads?

Why? Alas! the pen is rusted,
Lying useless, damp, encrusted,
Where it fell from pallid hands that write no more;
And the postman, passing daily,
Sees no more the maiden gayly,
Smiling, waiting for her letter at the door.

He is dead, that manly lover,
And the snows of winter cover
Pallid brow and pulseless breast as cold as they:
And she thinks, that stricken maiden—
With her youth thus sorrow-laden,
That her heart is dead and withered in its May.

* * * * *

She has learned to love another—
More than friend and more than brother—
(All those letters have turned yellow long ago);
There's a baby's laughter ringing,
As she clasps him, smiling, singing;—
She has learned the throbbing bliss that mothers know.

Yet she keeps those letters hidden,
And her heart still throbs unhidden
If she chance to touch the casket where they lie:
And she enters all undaunted,
To a chamber shadow-haunted,
Which no other, now or ever, cometh nigh.

She is happy now, and sweeter
Are the smiles that daily greet her,
Than was ever aught that haunted chamber keeps;
But let once her peace be broken,
And let bitter words be spoken—
She will read those yellow letters while she weeps.

Greenleaf.

'Twas midnight in a country town,
Through old, dim trees the moon's cold light
On sloping eaves and roofs of brown
Dropped trembling bare of silver white.

The village slept. Love nestled close
In clasping arms, and on the breast
Of weary care, in deep repose,
Tired hands lay folded and at rest.

The village slept, and sleeping, dreamed;
But one low roof, with moss grown wall,
Through whose bare panes the moonlight streamed,
Held one who slept nor dreamed at all.

A hermit, on a village street,
Long had he dwelt, unloved, alone;
Closed was his door to passing feet;
Only a dog to share his bone.

And while that night the village slept,
A colder and a deeper sleep
At midnight to his pillow crept;
With none to watch and none to weep.

Morn came, and noon, and passers by
Began to wonder more and more:
What ailed the dog—so piteously
He moaned and howled beside the door.

They forced the lock at last, and then
The sunlight streamed across the dead.
Brown cheeks grew pale, and stalwart men
Walked homeward with a heavy tread.

“Greenleaf is dead!”—the whisper went
From street to street. A solemn knell
Peals mournfully; all stand attent,
But no one weeps, while sobs the bell.

No sister, wife, no child, no friend!
No eyes with tender tears grow dim.
A lonely life—a lonely end;
What matter? It is naught to him.

Again the village sleeps—the bell
Hangs speechless as the breathless night:
Yet awe-struck watchers, whispering, tell
Weird tales beside a form in white.

Only a Woman.

Only a woman, shriveled and old,
The prey of the winds, and the prey of the cold!
 Cheeks that are shrunken,
 Eyes that are sunken,
 Lips that were never o'erbold;
Only a woman; forsaken and poor,
Asking an alms at the bronze church-door.

Hark to the organ! roll upon roll
The waves of its music go over the soul!
 Silks rustle past her
 Thicker and faster;
 The great bell ceases its toll.
Fain would she enter, but not for the poor
Swingeth wide open the bronze church door.

Only a woman - waiting alone,
Icily cold on an ice-cold throne.
 What do they care for her,
 Mumbling a prayer for her,
 Giving not bread but a stone.
Under gold laces their haughty hearts beat,
Mocking the woes of their kin in the street.

Only a woman! In the older days
Hope caroled to her in happiest lays;
 Somebody missed her,
 Somebody kissed her,
 Somebody crowned her with praise;
Somebody faced up the battles of life,
Strong for her sake who was mother or wife.

Somebody lies with a tress of her hair
Light on his heart where the death-shadows are;



"Treeless Desert," they called it then.
Haunted by beasts and forsook by men.

Somebody waits for her,
Opening the gates for her,
Giving delight for despair.
Only a woman—nevermore poor—
Dead in the snow at the bronze church-door.

Haunted.

There stood a goodly house—I knew it well.—
Built like a palace, with fair, stately halls,
Where all things pure and beautiful did dwell,
And sat at peace within its lovely walls.
And oft a voice, tuned like a sweet-toned bell,
In strains of throbbing music rose and fell.

A home of harmonies—a gentle throng!
A home of rest and peace; and yet there came—
Sudden and swift and dark—a day of shame.
Henceforth an end of peace, an end of song.
Henceforth a crowd of demons come and go,
And range all the chambers, high and low.

The house is haunted. Shadows dark as night,
With ghostly footfalls stalk from room to room;
And voices doleful as the cries of doom,
Shriek in the darkness, then anon a light
Flashes athwart the windows, fierce and fell,
And red and lurid as the flames of hell.

Alas! the wreck, the ruin that befalls!
Alas! the shaking, crumbling, and decay!
The very vines let go the tottering walls:
The very dogs take flight and flee away.
Appalled by sounds and sights so strange and dire—
The shrieks, the laughter, and the lurid fire.

An awful thing of terror, weird and wild;
A thing to gaze upon in speechless fear,
And yet to wring perforce the pitying tear.
This stately palace, ruined and defiled,
Waxing more foul and ghastly year by year;
Where peace and purity lie prone and slain:—
This haunted house—*is but a crazed brain.*

Farmer Jones on Corn.

How's corn to-day ma'am? And why should you wish to know?

Do such things bother a woman? Well, it is low.
I'm posted — you see I have been with a load to town.
It is weak, as they say in reports, and it's going down.

Hard times for farmers like me—and with rent so high!
The chinch bug; come like an army, the summer was dry;
It was scorching drouth and the chinch bug, and now it is
the bears:

And that takes me down to hard pan, but—who dares?

"Hold on to your corn," say the papers, I would if I could.
For those who can take this advice, the advice is good.
But I've got to sell for there is the rent to pay.
And other debts falling due—I've been dunned to-day.

I promise to pay, I find is a master stern.
And it's not for me to wait for the tide to rise.
To sell at the ebb, when so little there is to sell,
Seems rather rough, but the buyers—they like it well.

The rich grow richer, the poor man grows poorer still.
For if things get to going wrong it's all down hill.
He must sell for whatever the buyer may choose to pay.
And of prices of things he buys has nothing to say.

It is hard to be poor. Would the greedy rich but think
Of the sweat and toil that earned the gold they chink.
I fancy that pins would be stuck in their beds of down,
And their ill-gotten wealth would prick like a thorny crown.

It is hard to be poor; but I'd rather be poor than own
The wealth that some men squeeze out of blood and bone.
If the bed is hard where I gather my weary feet,
No specters haunt my pillow and my sleep is sweet.

I am growing old and my hair is growing gray;
I have done a deal of work for but little pay;
But I hope for the best—there are some who see these
things,
And who speak for the farmers in spite of moneyed kings.

I've made a good deal of talk, ma'am—but that's my way—
To answer your simple question, "How's corn to-day?"
I wish that the great might hear and understand
That the good of the working man is the good of the land.

Old Flames.

We labor and live in the same old town,
We traverse the same, same street;
We seldom smile, and never frown
As perchance our footsteps meet:—
A gentle nod—a wave of the hand—
Is our greeting, quite proper and neat.

Yet once, my life of life was she,
Her ideal of a man seemed I,
As together we pictured a destiny
Whose dawn was the bright by-and-by:—
The bright by-and-by, now far in our rear,
Stretched out between I and I.

Time changed us both in a single year,—
And we do not regret it now:
We changed, but why? 'tis as yet unclear—
We changed, and scarcely know how.
Forgotten were all the dreams we dreamt,
Our hopes our plighted vow.

Sombre and matter of fact we look,
As we follow our duties about:
Covers, we seem, of an old, old book
Whose pages are lost and torn out;—
The leaves have twirled away in the wind,
All tattered and sadly worn out.

Thus we labor and live in the same old town,
And traverse the same, same street:
Hardly a smile, but never a frown,
As perchance our footsteps meet;—
A kindly nod—a wave of the hand—
'Tis our greeting all proper and neat.

After the Wedding.

The guests are gone,—the pageantry
Has vanished like some brilliant dream;
The lamps are out—on thee and me
Only the moonlight sheds its gleam.
In this sweet hour—all else forgot
Save love—for us the world is not;
Naught reck we of its praise or curse.
Thou art, and I: and we two stand
Within a sweet enchantment land,
Alone amid the Universe.

All will come back,—the busy throng,
Discordant voices, jostling feet,—
And waves of trouble, swift and strong,
Against our walls shall break and beat.

But not to-night,—no, not to-night!
As sleeps yon lake, so calm, so bright,
 No rippling on its shining breast,
So sleeps all thought of future ill;
We only feel the throb and thrill
 That stirs two hearts when fully blest.

I give thee all, dear love, and so
 I learn the rarest bliss of living,
The purest rapture mortals know,—
 The joy ineffable of giving.
'Tis thine for aye: a stream so deep
Can never flow with backward sweep;
 No drought can shrink its living tide,—
Unless, unless thine eye grow cold,
And thy strong arm its tender fold
 Unclasp, to spurn me from thy side.

That cannot be. Thy tenderness,
 Thy thrilling glance, thy gentle tone,
Thy watchful care, thy dear caress,—
 These are—they will be—all my own.
They say that love's a torrent's dash,
A sudden fire, a meteor-flash,
 That blazes and then dies away.
Believe it not. True love's a sun,
That steadily, till life is done,
 Shines on and on, with quenchless ray.

The Farther Shore.

The night is long and lonely, and we wait
With silent watchfulness, with sleepless fears,
For One who shall unlock the shining gate,
And end the darkness of this night of tears.

Before us, through the gloom, a river runs,
With silent tide, forever dark and chill;
Reflecting no white moons or golden suns,
Tossed by no waves—so ghastly, calm and still!

No murmuring ripple and no friendly roar
Warns, in the darkness, of the dangerous brink.
We know not, ever, whither lies the shore,
Nor at what moment we may slip and sink.

Close at our feet may be these waters wide—
So we grope darkly, and one footfall more
May be a leap into the swallowing tide,
Where countless thousands have gone down before.

A chilling plunge—an end of life's swift dream—
And still the river shall flow calmly on,
As silent as before. Oh, ruthless stream!
So cold and pitiless thy waters run!

Yet this dark river has another shore,
And yonder, yonder is the golden gate!
A flood of light shall break these waters o'er,
When He unlocks it—He, for whom we wait.

Then shall the sleepers wake. The hungry tide,
His dead shall gather to his arms no more.
The glad and glorious throng, cleansed, purified,
Shall stand in white upon the farther shore.

To Emma, On Her Wedding Day.

Dear friend, I will not wish you perfect joy:
That comes not on this earth. No mortal drinks
An unmixed cup; all good has much alloy;
And life's long chain must have some iron links.

I wish, instead, that you may know the peace—
The steady calm—that comes of duty done.
The best springs feed, not torrents, soon to cease,
But summer rills, that through dry weather run.

Life hath its poetry, run how it may;—
I need not tell you that it hath its prose.
Your feet may bleed,—for thorns grow in the way—
But every thorn, remember, bears its rose.

Shut not your eyes, but turn them toward the light,
E'en when it struggles down in cloudy bars.
Dark days may come, and deepen into night:—
Oh, then look up, and you shall see the stars!

Thus, he whose hand you take to climb life's hill,
Shall find you at his side a presence sweet,
Giving, when needed, firmness to his will,
Strength to his arm, and fleetness to his feet.

Would you do more? no need to scour the land
For work to do; work of your own will come.
She who wants labor, finds it at her hand;
She who hath aught to say, need not be dumb.

I think you will be strong—I know you well;—
I think that you will seek to do the best
You find to do—yet what, I cannot tell.
Do it, be true, and leave to God the rest.

Wooing.

A COUNTRY BALLAD.

There is a worthy widower, one of our "solid men",
And he was born and bred—I can't tell where or when:—
But he lives near by the "Ancient City," Aztalan,
Which has stood beside the Crawfish since the memory of
man.

He has built himself a castle with many a point and steeple,
Which, through all the country round, is the wonder of the
people;
He has built himself a barn with a lofty "cupalo",
Where painted beasts look down on the living ones below.

But this dweller by the Crawfish, in the town of Aztalan,
For all his Gothic Castle, is a very lonely man;
For a house without a mistress is a hive without a queen,
And he sighs with discontent as he views his acres green.

He wants a wife; but all in vain for him the widow smiles;
In vain the well-kept spinster may try her sweetest wiles:
He looks among the maidens with rosy cheeks, and curls,
And seeks to find his queen from among the village girls.

And now begins my story, which is too good to keep;
I've heard it here so often that I hear it in my sleep:
What all the gossips know, it can't be wrong to tell,
So here is what did happen, and this is what befell:

This solid, landed man, who wants a better half,
One day had been somewhere and bought a blooded calf;
He had it in his wagon, likewise his hired man,
And he had his horses headed for the town of Aztalan.

But, alas for side attractions! They were passing through
the town

That sits by yonder lake, with its houses white and brown,
When he reigned aside his team at a pretty village gate;
He wished to "call a minute," and told his man to wait.

But dark eyes shown within, and he found himself en-
chanted;

And, swift and unaware, the enchanted evening waned.
Till he started on a sudden, exclaiming, "By the powers!"
For Time, that waits for no man, had passed the smallest
hours.

It was time to seek his cattle, in the town of Aztalan!
He remembered now his team and the waiting hired man;
Where were they? Hans had waited, how long I cannot
say;

But the night was gray and chill, and his patience oozed
away.

Then he drove along a piece, hitched the horses to the
fence,

And made tracks for home, like a man of common sense;
He left the hungry horses, the wagon and the calf;
But for him to wait all night, it was too much, by half!

When at last the man came out, he didn't see his team,
For the clouded morning moon gave but a feeble gleam;
He looked about, and, seeing neither man nor brute,
Supposed that all were gone, and posted off afoot.

He laid him down and slept,—'tis thus the story goes;
Whether his dreams were sad or sweet, nobody knows;
He rose at early dawn and to his stable sped.
But lo! the stalls were empty: and his heart it sunk like
lead.

He called to Hans: "See here; where are those horses, sir?"
"Why, in the stable, aren't they? I supposed of course they
were;

"I left them waiting, sir, for you. Pray do not fret;
"I tied them well; I think they must be waiting yet!"

The honest fellow didn't see the ghastly joke,
But his angry master did, and then in thunder spoke:
Here, sir! Post off! Be quick, and get that team away,
Before the pesky villagers are stirring for the day!

But all too late! the folks were up, and loud the laugh
That greeted that poor Dutchman, those horses and that
calf;

They questioned Hans, who straightway all the story told.
Which same the villagers repeat to young and old.

Here is the wholesome moral, which this tale doth plainly
teach,

And this the printed sermon such experience doth preach:
That solid landed men who are seeking better halves,
Shouldn't try to do their wooing when they go a buying
calves.







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